

COMPENDIOUS ACCOUNT

OF THE

CONTROVERSY in the ASSOCIATE SYNOD,

BETWEEN

The Rev. ADAM GIB Minister in EDINBURGH,

AND

MICHAEL ARTHUR Minister in ABERDEEN,

IN RELATION TO

The Commencement and Expiration of the Twelve Hundred and Sixty days of the Witnesſes prophesying in ſackcloth, or the Riſe and Downfal of the GRAND ANTICHRIST;—the Proteſtant Reformation;—and the Breach in the Synod occaſioned by a diverſity of ſentiments among Members about the religious part of the BURGESS OATH; and the ſubſequent Cenſures inflicted upon the Burgher Miniſters, particularly the Higher Excommunication.

EDINBURGH, 1786.

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COMPENDIOUS ACCOUNT, &c.

IT is with real concern I make this unexpected appeal to the Public. Having reason to think that my present situation is much misunderstood, and, by *designing* persons, with a view sufficiently obvious, misrepresented—I reckon justice to myself, and, which is a far higher consideration, justice to *truth*, requires me to give the world an authentic and impartial account of it. My unimportant story I shall endeavour to bring within as narrow boundaries as the nature and circumstances of it will at all permit.—The hurt the Synod have done to their own character, and particularly to the interests of religion, by their conduct in this unhappy contest, is to me a painful consideration. Often since the commencement of it, has it been a question with me, whether it might be my duty to pass in *contemptuous* silence, all the *ill-founded* and *unprovoked* accusations my antagonist, in his usual illiberal manner*, has brought against me; or to endeavour to repel them. To the former, a desire for peace, seconded by the pressing solicitations of a number of members of Synod whom I esteem, strongly inclined me. Many of them have said to me, were they in my place, they would treat with silent contempt, all my accuser has advanced against me: But from experience I have learned, that none of us can tell how we will act in certain circumstances, till we be in them.

Various are the considerations from which I have been urged to overlook the unexampled treatment, which, it is admitted, I have received from my opponent. I have been told, that the Burgher-controversy is his *hobby-horse*. They have said, To an-

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swer,

* Considering Mr Gib's education and years, I have often wondered at his illiberal and scurrilous manner of treating every man that differs from him;—whether he be friend or foe, it does not at all matter. Were I to attempt to excel in that species of composition we call *scurrility*, I certainly should pitch upon him for the model on which I would wish to form. His warning against Mr Whitefield, and examination of Mr Hall, must be allowed to be master-pieces of this kind. It has often been observed, that habits contracted at an early period of life are with great difficulty, if at all, eradicated. It has, perhaps, been an infelicity both to him and his numerous opponents, that one of his first encounters happened to be with a *taylor*. But when he was warning against Mr Whitefield, and examining Mr Hall, notwithstanding that the former was a Priest of the Church of England, and the latter a Member of the Burgher-Brotherhood, he certainly ought to have recollected that he was not combating the Taylor of Biggar.

swer, is to gratify him,—and to take no notice of him, the only effectual method to mortify him; for, by answering him, we furnish him with a fresh opportunity to vent that rancour and scurrility to which he has all along been accustomed. I have been advised in the words of the wisest of men, *Answer not a fool according to his folly*.—A reverend correspondent writes me thus: “I have very carefully perused the Rev. Mr Gib’s testimony against your nameless reverence; and, to make surer of his meaning, I have read the whole pamphlet twice over. Your Synod-sermon I had formerly perused, and now have read it again: And let me tell you, Sir, had I had the honour of delivering your sermon, I would be self-sufficient enough to think it could stand on its own legs, without vindication or apology; and that no more is necessary to satisfy a candid mind in judging between Mr Gib and you, but a perusal of your respective pamphlets.”—Many have reminded me of my antagonist’s advanced time of life, and approaching dissolution; to which they have very seldom failed to add their good wishes for his *speedy translation* to the celestial world, as a signal deliverance to the militant Church. I have been put in mind of David’s words in relation to Shimei—*Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day*.—In fine, the royal mandate relating to the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh, has been suggested to me—*The King’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not*.—By such arguments have members of Synod and others attempted to dissuade me from taking any public notice of the libel Mr Gib presented, first to the Synod, and afterwards to the Public, against me;—and by which I consider myself as aggrieved in a manner almost unparalleled in the history of the Church. Had the matter appeared to me in the light some members of Synod, and members whom I supposed capable of giving a juster account of it, pretended to see it, I certainly had reckoned it my honour, as well as my duty, to have passed it in the easiest manner. It has been called *a personal cause*. But that it can with no propriety be designed a personal difference between Mr Gib and me, the following detail will evince. —

This controversy, in which the Synod unwarily involved themselves, originated from a sermon I had the honour to deliver before the Synod, and which was published, some years ago. The Synod having at their Autumn-meeting 1778, done me the honour of chusing me to be their Moderator, it belonged to me to preach officially before them at their meeting in the subsequent Spring. Accordingly on the 29th of April 1779, I preached to them from Rev. xi. 3.—*I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred* and

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and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. In order to the elucidation of this important and difficult subject, I undertook to do four things—To give a brief account of God's two witnesses—To speak of their prophesying—To explain the season of their prophesying, expressed by 1260 days—And to consider the manner and circumstances of their prophesying, pointed out by their habit—they are said to be clothed in sackcloth. Immediately after the delivery of this detested sermon, Mr Gib told me, in company with several other members of Synod, in his own house, that he was not satisfied with my explication of the 1260 days of the prophesying of the witnesses. But this intimation neither offended nor alarmed me. I am resolved ever to give to others the liberty I intend to take to myself.—I allow Mr Gib and every other man to judge for himself; and I will judge for myself. Having been solicited by several members of Synod, and a number of the other hearers, to publish the sermon, I began, soon after my return from the Synod, to transcribe it. The manuscript I sent to a member of Synod in the West of Scotland, of whom, for his many valuable qualifications, I have long had a high esteem; informing him, by letter, that I had been solicited to publish it, but much hesitated about the propriety or expediency of such a step, especially on account of Mr Gib's known opposition to some things in it. I desired him to peruse the manuscript with all possible attention, and to give me his opinion with the utmost freedom;—adding, that his opinion was finally to determine me in relation to the publication. My worthy correspondent granted my requisition, and returned for answer, that, after perusing my manuscript, and considering the controverted sentiment, it was his fixed opinion, that I should immediately publish the sermon; and that I could support the sentiment, to which Mr Gib had objected, against all he or any other man could advance in opposition to it.—Accordingly the sermon was published with all convenient speed. Happening to be in Edinburgh, and to call for Mr Gib, two years and a half after the sermon was preached, and two years and three months after it was published, he told me, for the first time, that he was highly offended at the account my sermon gave of the Burgher breach in the Synod, and the censures inflicted on the Burgher Ministers *.—I told him, that my design

* Mr Gib has informed his Readers, that the great offence my sermon gave him, was occasioned especially by a particular circumstance, which, to persons of less discernment and zeal, must appear unimportant, and on my part was altogether accidental and unintended. It is a notification, in *capital letters*, that it was published by desire. Memorial, &c. p. 43. In justice to myself, I must say, that I never, either by word or writing, desired the Printer to put this intimation in capitals. Nay, had I foreseen that he was to do so, and that this was to offend good Mr Gib, I certainly would have desired him to put it in smaller letters. What! capital letters on the title-page of an uncapital sermon! What an incongruity! What good man would not be offended?

in composing and delivering the sermon, and particularly those parts of it with which he was so greatly dissatisfied, was not to offend him or any other man; but to do a real service to the Synod, by vindicating it from a most reproachful imputation, with which it has often been loaded,—a supposition that it requires of its members, an approbation of the censures passed against their Burgher brethren. I gloried in such a favourable opportunity of telling my hearers, that this is an invidious and groundless aspersion. That Mr Gib is a strenuous defender of the lawfulness and expediency of that extraordinary measure, I was not ignorant. But I considered myself as a man, and a protestant. Implicit credit in matters of religion, I never will give to any man or synod on earth. Of the supposed heresy of my sermon I heard no more till the last day of the subsequent meeting of Synod.

The manner in which my accuser chose to introduce this singular cause into the Synod, notwithstanding his pretensions to old forms, certainly is a novelty;—an innovation, in its nature and circumstances, the most extraordinary our times have produced. Were the inspired writer of Ecclesiastes to rise from the dead, and to be informed of it, would he not be obliged to retract his assertion, and to allow, that *now* there is at least one new thing under the sun? Extraordinary men can do extraordinary things *. On the first of May 1782, two years and nine months after the sermon was published, and three years and two days after it was delivered, Mr Gib suddenly rose, and, to the astonishment of the whole Synod, and every person present, without introduction or apology, or any account of the occasion or design of the motion, informed them, that he had prepared a paper, and demanded of the Synod an opportunity to read it to them, in the forenoon of the following day, at a public meeting, in the church. This wonderful and unexpected requisition not only alarmed every member of Synod, but, as might be thought on such an uncommon emergency, excited in the breast of every person present, an anxious desire to know the occasion, contents, and intention of the mysterious paper. Accordingly a number of members of Synod insisted, that, previous to their granting this extraordinary demand, they should discern him to inform them of the nature of the mysterious paper;

* Mr Gib has informed us, that he had *reasons* for not bringing forward this affair in the ordinary channel of synodical business; and for not mentioning those reasons, he has other reasons, p. 30. Here is a secret within a secret,—a mystery within a mystery. If my good antagonist shall, at any after period, favour us with another publication on this interesting subject, he will probably inform us, that, as he had a second class of reasons for not discovering the first, he has a third class of reasons for concealing the second. If, however, he has only one class of reasons for each publication, without pretending to the spirit of prophecy, I will venture to foretel, that he will not multiply them in *infinitum*.

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paper; but in vain. He remained unalterably determined, for reasons *then* known to himself, and to us all *now*, to keep the paper, and every thing relating to it, a profound secret. Was ever the mason-oath as great a secret to the swearer, previous to the actual administration of it, as his paper was to the Synod, till he was pleased, in the manner he thought proper to prescribe, and at the time he saw fit to nominate, to read it to them? Such an instance of arbitrary power in Mr Gib, and simplicity in the Synod, excites at once, in the breasts of friends and foes, indignation and pity. That a number of such men should allow themselves to be dup'd and befooled by a man, that has, in many instances, and to the no small discredit of the Secession, distinguished himself by an itch for ecclesiastical domination, is truly amazing*. Well did my accuser know that a previous discovery of his design would have effectually defeated the execution of it. Accordingly, notwithstanding that a number of members of Synod opposed his absurd request, in a manner that did honour to them as men and as ministers, he persisted, and prevailed. His requisition was granted in its fullest extent. He obtained a full allowance to read his unknown paper, in the place, and at the time, he had condescended to name. Every precaution was taken. Not so much as a possibility of obstruction or miscarriage was left. For it was expressly stipulated on the part of Mr Gib, and restipulated on the part of the Synod, that whatever the contents might be, he was to be permitted to read it without interruption. For any thing that any member of Synod knew, it might have been the most scandalous, not to say blasphemous libel that ever blotted paper. Whether was the policy and the power of Mr Gib, or the silliness of the Synod, most

* At an early period did Mr Gib begin to discover an imperious and aspiring spirit in the Synod. The distinguished part he took, and the violent appearances he made, in the Burgher controversy, both Burghers and Antiburghers will long remember. On different occasions has a reverend member of a certain southern presbytery, with great good humour, told me of a most pertinent reprimand a venerable father, on the other side of the question, gave him. After he had finished one of his long declamatory speeches on that inauspicious cause, that reverend father, in his usual grave manner, rose, lifted the Bible, turned up the 3d Epistle of John, and, with a solemnity peculiar to himself, read the following words:—*Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.* Having read these words, he closed the book, and sat down; leaving our modern Diotrephes to his own reflections. The propriety and force of such a check must strike every one that knows Mr Gib, in a manner no words can express. His power in Synod, indeed, has been on the decline for years past. Of this partial diminution of his synodical power he is most sensible. Oftener than once have I heard him, in the most plaintive strains, and with tearing eyes, lamenting it. But almost all others in Synod, as well as out of it, are exceedingly thankful for it. He has unhappily had a chief hand in almost all the controversies and divisions that have distracted and disgraced the Secession-church. The religious connection which for a number of years subsisted between him and me, is, I hope, at an end for this world. If ever we meet in the better world, we will both be better men than either the one of us, or the other, ever yet has been.

most conspicuous on this occasion? The plan was worthy of its author, and the execution was not inferior to the design. Notice, public notice, was given of the disclosing of the wonderful secret on the day preceding, that friends and foes might be duly apprised. That curiosity might be excited to an unusual pitch, every circumstance relating to it was concealed, till the arrival of the important period at which the interesting discovery was to be made. It was determined to be at a public meeting, with doors open for the admission of persons of all descriptions. It was in the church, as the largest place to which they had access, that many hundreds might be accommodated to be spectators and witnesses of the arraignment and condemnation of a persecuted sermon. Was not this a most masterly stroke of that policy, and a most vigorous stretch of that usurpation, by which my antagonist has long affected, rather assumed, a paramount power in Synod? He could not but be conscious that his paper, in fact, was a most infamous libel. He did not, however, chuse to serve me with a *formal* libel,—to commence a proper process against me, either at the Bar of the Synod, or that of my own Presbytery,—or to introduce it into the Synod in the manner every other cause is introduced into it. It behoved him to invent a new method. This he contrived, and effected, in a manner worthy of himself. Well did he know that a fair trial would have effectually defeated his scheme. It behoved the obnoxious sermon to be impeached and condemned instantaneously. Hard fate!

Neither I, nor, so far as I know, any other member of Synod, had any idea of the contents of the paper, till the author of it was pleased to allow us, along with several hundreds of various denominations, to hear it read. The only conjecture I could form, was, that it might possibly be a testimony against that pretended degeneracy of the Synod, of which I had heard him on former occasions insinuate strong suspicions. That real religion is on the decline in the Secession-church, as well as the other churches of Christ, is a mournful truth. But this is not what he means by degeneracy. Several years prior to the delivery of the sermon, he offered to the Synod, and urged them to pass into an act, an overture, homologating all the public proceedings of the Synod for a long series of years preceding, particularly their proceedings against the Burgher ministers. We all knew that his great object was the much desired synodical ratification of the excommunication of the Burghers, the propriety of which he, in his great zeal and wonderful penetration, suspected many to call in question. It occurred to me, and to others as well as me, that as almost all the excommunicated ministers previous to that period, had been removed to the other, and, I hope, the better world, there

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was no occasion for inflicting upon them any of the censures peculiar to the sub-celestial state of the church, or for ratifying any already inflicted. Accordingly zealous Mr Gib, to his no small mortification and grief, found all his interest in Synod insufficient to carry his darling point. Thus disappointed and chagrined, he has since embraced every opportunity of venting his resentment and spleen. My feelings during the reading of the long libel, which I unexpectedly found to be wholly against myself, it is easier for others to conceive, than for me to express*. Unexpected as the attack was, however, and disconcerted as I may be supposed to have been, I had the recollection to find that the paper was a most invidious libel, a gross violation of all order, and subversive of the common rights of mankind, as well as of the special privileges of christians. As soon, therefore, as it was read, I insisted that the Synod should appoint my accuser to reduce it to proper form, that I might have a fair trial for my conviction, or my exculpation. Was the demand unjust or unreasonable? Either I was guilty, or not guilty. If the former was the case, it was a likely method for my conviction; if the latter, it was calculated for my necessary exculpation. But no! several members of Synod reprobated Mr Gib's conduct, and insisted for justice, with a freedom that did great honour to them, and I pled strenuously upon my just demand, I could by no means obtain it†. My accuser not only opposed my requisition for a fair trial, but, in the most supercilious and haughty manner, refused to allow me to see the libellous paper, or even to leave it with the Synod, except on the ex-

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* Even good Mr Gib himself seems to have felt exceedingly for me on this trying occasion. He has told the Public, that he was sorry, on my account, that I had no other or better appearance to make for myself than in floods of bold declamation against him, p. 31. His words here, indeed, have been considered as exceedingly paradoxical, if not grossly disingenuous. Some of his own brethren, uncharitable mortals! have had the "effrontery" to question his sincerity in this declaration. Others of them, shallow creatures! have been difficulted to reconcile his words with his after conduct. His words, if they mean any thing, appear to imply, he wished that I had had some better defence to make for myself. But when, on another occasion, I read my defence to the Synod, he would not sit to hear it. This mystery he, no doubt, can unravel. When he may be pleased to do so, and in what manner, time, that old revealer of secrets, must determine.

† Mr Gib, among various other articles of interesting intelligence, has informed his readers, that several members of Synod espoused my cause with *rudeness*, p. 31. That idea he affixes to the word *rudeness*, I know not. They appeared to me to treat both Mr Gib and the Synod with all due respect. My non-observation of their alleged rudeness I might have attributed to my ignorance, had not Mr Gib, as an infallible judge of men and manners, informed me that I am well bred myself, and therefore must be a judge of good breeding in others. He has told the Public, that when my vanity prompted me to aspire after the high honour of being ranked among the best expositors, *I step'd up to take my place among them in a mannerly way*, p. 49.—I mention this circumstance the rather that if Mr Gib, or other of equal authority, if another such there be, had not certified me, I never had known that *fine breeding* is one of my accomplishments.

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press condition of their admitting it, at least the last part of it relating to the Burgher controversy, into their minutes. Finding no small opposition to his demand, in order to frighten the Synod into a compliance, he told them, in his usual dictatorial stile, that it behoved them immediately to receive his paper, or at least the last part of it, otherways he was determined, with all convenient speed, to publish the whole of it to the world. In order, therefore, to prevent the further spread of the affair, the Synod agreed to admit the last part of it.—All I could obtain from the Synod was a bare permission, in common with other members of Synod, to apply to the clerk if I should see occasion, for a copy of that part of the paper the Synod had received into their minutes; and an additional allowance to prepare an answer to that part of it, to be read at the ensuing meeting of Synod, that it also might be inserted in the minutes. This answer was accordingly read in Synod on the 5th of September 1782, and entered into the minutes*.

Thus the matter rested at that time. I felt, in the most sensible manner, the injury I had received from my accuser. But a solicitude for peace, and to prevent farther breaches, operated with me in a very forcible manner.—One circumstance had great weight with me, and afflicted me to a degree I cannot easily express. The very day preceding that on which my sermon was impetunelled, the Synod transported me to a congregation in its infancy, and which, from its local situation, is exposed to peculiar temptations;—Mr Gib, notwithstanding his unknown design expressly concurring in the transportation. Had I had the smallest hint of his intention, I certainly had not accepted the call. Thus, from pacific considerations, I was inclined to forbear prosecution of the cause, till I should see to what line of conduct the after-disposals and openings of providence might direct me. But, when on my way to the Spring-meeting of Synod 1783, to my astonishment and grief, I was informed, that, though the Synod had admitted the last part of his paper into their minutes, for the express purpose of preventing the publication of it, he, in his restless zeal and unrelenting opposition to me, had published the whole paper, with my answer to the inserted part of it, and his remarks upon that answer. I now saw, that of his opposition to me there was no end; and that it was my duty to take the matter under my serious consideration, and pursue such measures

* Of the reading of my answer Mr Gib has favoured the Public with a most circumstantial and interesting account. The brevity with which I have resolved to conduct this undertaking, will not permit me to do justice to the importance and variety of information concerning it, with which he has favoured us. I must refer my curious reader to his long and important note, p. 32. 33. Among many other articles of equal moment, he has apprised his readers, my answer was badly written, that it was impossible for the clerk, and difficult for myself, to read it. Important and useful information! Much is the Public indebted to him for it.

measures, as, for the reasons already mentioned, I had formerly declined to take. But, before I narrate my after-proceedings, I shall state the chief articles of the libel, and subjoin such answers to them as I reckon necessary and proper.

But, first of all, I shall transcribe the criminal parts of my sermon. These Mr Gib has comprehended under three quotations, which, that I may do him the utmost justice, I shall transcribe from his own pamphlet.

Quotation 1.—"We understand the twelve hundred and sixty days in the text (Rev. xi. 3.), of the same period intended by the forty-two months of treading under foot the holy city, in the verse preceding the text,—and the forty-two months of the power of the Beast, chap. xiii. 5. The twelve hundred and sixty days evidently are to be interpreted of twelve hundred and sixty years. The great question is, when these twelve hundred and sixty days or years commenced?—(the first rise of the Roman Antichrist, or the commencement of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, p. 13.)—If we knew when they commenced, we could easily ascertain the period at which they are to expire. Now, as to the commencement and expiration of these days or years, there are different opinions. There are especially two opinions, one or other of which may perhaps be the true one. The first opinion is, that the twelve hundred and sixty days commenced about the year 300, and consequently expired about the year 1560.—But a second opinion has been adopted, and defended by the best expositors, namely, that the twelve hundred and sixty days or years rather are to be understood to commence about the year 756, and consequently will totally expire about the year 2016.—The forty-two months of the power of the Beast commenced, or the Beast appeared, about the year 756; when the Pope became a temporal prince, or was invested with the temporal dominion of Rome. These twelve hundred and sixty days are to be understood to have commenced about the year 756, and consequently totally to expire about the year 2016,—the power of the Beast to be wholly at an end.—This is the second opinion in relation to the commencement and expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty days.—If we might at all judge or determine in so difficult a case, we would incline to the second opinion."—P. 22, 25, 26, 27, 29.—Memorial, &c. p. 6, 7.

Quotation 2.—"The unhappy rupture or breach which so early happened in the seceding body, has been much improved against the testimony and cause in which we are embarked.—The mournful breach in the Associate Synod deserves indeed to be lamented and bewailed to the latest ages. We have reason to consider that dismal event as a providential intimation of what was to befall the generation. Matters were so ordered by a God

of judgment, that a stumbling-block was laid in the way of the generation, and they judicially left to harden and confirm themselves against that good cause in which we have embarked.—Thus that mournful dispensation bespeaks not so much perhaps dissatisfaction with the parties between whom the rupture happened, as displeasure with the generation among whom they live, and who so violently oppose their testimony. Whatever sinful hand, either the one party, or the other, or both, had in the breach, God had an all-wise, unerring, and over-ruling hand in it.”—P. 35, 36.—Mem. p. 22, 23.

Quotation 3.—“The procedure of this Synod against their Burgher-brethren, has been much improved against the cause and testimony in which we are engaged. Admitting this Synod to have erred in the matter of censuring the Burgher-brethren, why should this be urged or improved to the disadvantage of our testimony?—It is a principle received in all Protestant Churches, and particularly among us, that all Synods and Assemblies may err; and, in particular instances, do err.—An approbation of the censures inflicted on the Burgher-brethren never has been made a term of communion, either ministerial or christian communion, among us. All that is required of us in relation to this controversy, in order to ministerial communion with this Synod, is, that we be satisfied in our consciences concerning the decision of Synod in April 1746, finding the religious clause of the burghers-oath inconsistent with the testimony.”—P. 36, 37.—Mem. p. 24, 25.

These are the criminal, and all the criminal parts of the condemned sermon.—But, methinks, I hear my readers interrupting me—What! are these passages criminal or erroneous? What crime or error is here?—These sentiments we should not be either afraid or ashamed to avow before any Synod on earth. Would to God all our sermons were as orthodox!—That the error my accuser, in his unparalleled penetration, has discovered in these passages escapes their observation, I do not at all wonder. Justice to him requires me to say, that, so far as I can understand, they would have eluded the sagacity of all mankind to the end of the world, had not he, by an acumen peculiar to himself, discovered them, and favoured the world with the important and useful discovery. In these few sentences, innocent as they may appear to others, he has found three capital and complicated evils. The first quotation has furnished him with two grievous accusations against me, which I shall state exactly in his own words, subjoining a specimen of his illustrations. Thus he begins—

“In the first place, I apprehend, that, by several passages of the sermon, a grievous injury has been done to most unquestionable testimonies of the Holy Scriptures.”—Heavy charge! An injury

injury, and a grievous injury to the Scriptures, *i. e.* the Scripture-prophecies of the rise, reign, and downfall of the Roman Antichrist. Do my readers ask, what injury have the quoted parts of the sermon done to the sacred Scriptures? or what does Mr Gib mean by this charge? The case stands thus—The quotation specifies two opinions in relation to the commencement and expiration of the 1260 days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, or the rise and downfall of the Grand Antichrist; and gives a sort of preference to the latter. The first opinion affirms the 1260 days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, or the 42 months of the power of the Beast, to have ended about the year 1560, and consequently to have begun about the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century.—The second opinion supposes these days or months did not commence till the year 756, and consequently will not expire till the year 2016. All the preference I presumed to give to the second opinion, is in the following words, which must be allowed to be sufficiently modest: “If we might at all judge or determine in so difficult a case, we would incline to the second opinion.” This preference, modest as it must be allowed to be, raised Mr Gib’s exemplary zeal to an unusual pitch. This is the thing which, he informs us, has done the injury, and the grievous injury, to the Holy Scriptures. Accordingly, in his illustration of the charge, he reprobates it in terms of uncommon severity. Oftener than once does he brand it with the opprobrious epithet of “the false date of Antichrist’s rise.” p. 13. He designates it “a pitiful fiction,” p. 14.—And adds, “This new unscriptural, antiscryptural scheme about the rise of Antichrist, is not to be considered as a harmless tho’ mistaken speculation, which may be entertained without any practical disadvantage;—for it necessarily produces a very bad effect,” *ib.*—I will follow him no further at present. I have given my readers a sufficient specimen of his illustrations. They certainly are characteristic of their author.—Thus, if they chuse to take his word, or sustain his naked assertion for a sufficient proof, the opinion to which I incline is altogether false; it is a pitiful fiction; it is an antiscryptural scheme; it has a most pernicious tendency; for it necessarily produces a very bad effect. My readers must recollect the diffidence with which I adopt the second opinion. Whether Mr Gib’s confidence, or my diffidence, be the greater, it really is not easy to determine. That the opinion he, in his usual dictatorial manner, adopts, is wrong, I am confident. But that the other opinion is right, I will not positively affirm, far less undertake to prove. If there be in the Scriptures such things as doubtful disputations, this certainly is one of them. It is a point that has divided the most learned and pious men in the ages that are past, and will continue to divide them for ages to come. I undertook this work

work with a fixed resolution to pass in silence this part of Mr Gib's testimony, and to allow him and his votaries to please themselves with their own speculations, be they harmless or hurtful; but the inclination I feel to review the arguments, if they can with any degree of truth or propriety be called arguments, by which he supports his hypothesis, is almost irresistible.

His first argument is taken from the supposed superiority of that worthy interpreter of the book of the Revelation, from whom he borrows his opinion, to the interpreters that favour the opinion to which I give the preference. Thus he speaks,—“These alledged best expositors, *i. e.* Dr Newton, Mr Lowman, Dr Guyse, &c. deserve not, in the present case, to be named on the same day with Mr Durham, but ought to be considered as *romancers*, rather than *expositors*, upon this and many other parts of the Revelation, p. 7. 8.” But supposing, though not at all granting, the superiority of Mr Durham, the alledged author of the first opinion, to Dr Newton, Mr Lowman, Dr Guyse, Dr Doddridge, and all the other abettors of the second opinion, what does this prove? Does the greatest and best man always hit on the truest interpretation of every Scripture-text that comes in his way? Where, in the whole Christian world, is a man to be found, the Roman Pontiff alone excepted, that has as high pretensions to infallible certainty concerning difficult texts, and controverted points in religion, as Mr Gib?—But is Mr Gib himself always right? Is he never mistaken concerning a controverted text? I have had the happiness both to hear him expound and apply, and, if I might presume to judge or determine in so difficult a case, I would say, I incline to think I have heard him mistaken concerning a text. Far be it from me to depreciate the character of the great and the good Mr Durham. His memory is savoury and precious in the churches of Christ. I have, perhaps, as great a regard for him as Mr Gib can pretend to have: And I will take this opportunity to say, that, in my opinion, it would have been happy for Mr Gib himself, and the Secession-church, ever since he was a member and minister of it, if he had been all along actuated by that spirit of candour and moderation that breathes in that good man's writings. Repeated breaches, by which the Secession-interest has been much discredited, and the progress of it retarded, might have been happily prevented. But why such an odious comparison between Mr Durham and the truly respectable characters I mentioned on my side of the question? Are they not characters justly allowed by all mankind, Mr Gib alone excepted, to be truly respectable? Their reputation for solid and useful learning, and the great service which, by their valuable writings, they have done to the interests of religion, is such, that neither can I add to it, or Mr Gib detract from it. The

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pretended inferiority of my authorities he seems to place in two circumstances. Two of them happen to have been ministers of the Episcopal church of England. Accordingly Mr Gib, with a design abundantly manifest, takes care to prefix to the first of them his episcopal character, styling him "*Bishop* Newton, p. 7." Is it asked, what is this to the purpose? I answer, it is nothing to the main purpose; but it answers Mr Gib's purpose? The question is not, indeed, of what church were Dr Newton and Mr Lowman members, but have they hit on the true interpretation of the prophecies of the Revelation relating to the Roman Antichrist?—This, no doubt, is the question. But Mr Gib knows, and I know too, that there is a species of readers with whom the mighty argument couched in the word *Bishop*, will be decisive. What! shall an Episcopalian expositor come in competition with a Presbyterian? Both Mr Gib and I must be read and judged by ignorant children and selfish bigots, as well as intelligent men and judicious christians. My authorities, however, were not all of the Episcopal persuasion. Neither was Dr Guyse or Dr Doddridge an Episcopalian.—There is another argument by which Mr Gib no doubt thinks he has not only proved the inferiority of my authorities, but set them entirely aside. He informs the Public, that the authors whom, to borrow his own beautiful words, I had "the ignorance and effrontery" to recommend as the very best expositors, are so far from being the very best, that they are no expositors at all, but only *romancers*. Romantic assertion! Does Mr Gib avow it, or is it to be placed in the list of typographical errors? Was he serious, or did he slumber, when he wrote this part of his testimony*? Is Mr Gib a reader of romances? Do not mistake me. Even the good Mr Gib himself has been, and may be worse employed, than in reading Dr Newton on the Prophecies, Mr Lowman and Dr Doddridge, &c. on the Revelation.

The *second* argument Mr Gib has found in a monosyllable in a New Testament prophecy relating to the downfall of the grand Antichrist, p. 8.—2 Thef. xi. 6. 7. 8. *Ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth, will let until he be taken out of the way. And THEN shall that wicked be revealed.*—That this passage relates to the grand Antichrist, and foretels his ruin, is readily admitted. And that the heathen state of the Roman empire, or the form of government that now subsisted, was an obstacle in the way of the revelation of the

* When I once complained to one of Mr Gib's brethren of the indiscreet and irritating manner in which he has attacked me, he told me that he considered many things he has advanced against me as the *dotages of old age*. But, in justice to him, I must say, that as far as I can judge, he is no more of the dotard now than he was forty years ago. If any will still insist that he is frantic, I must say, neither old age nor great learning, but *much zeal, hath made him mad*.

the Man of Sin, is no less certain. This was the thing that hindered, and which accordingly was to be removed previous to, his appearance. In order to the erection and propagation of the Antichristian kingdom, secular power was indispensibly necessary. So different is it from the kingdom of the Redeemer, which is by no means of, though for a season in, this world. But the question here is, Does this prophecy, and particularly that *little word* in it, which Mr Gib has put in capitals, and on which he has rested the weight of his argument, prove, that the abolition of Paganism, or the establishment of Christianity in the empire, and the revelation of the Man of Sin, or the full formation of the Antichristian Beast, were to be so co-incident in point of time, that the moment the former happened, it behoved the latter also to happen? This is the precise question; and till Mr Gib prove this, which he has not yet proved, and I will venture to predict he never will prove, his argument goes for nothing. But, does not Mr Gib's hypothesis confute itself? Does he not err exceedingly in his calculations? If the commencement of the 1260 days of the witnesses was posterior to the abolition of Paganism, and the establishment of the Christian religion in the empire, which he admits did not happen till 313, how could those days or years end so early as 1555? If they ended in the year 1555, they must have commenced as early as the year 295. If they commenced in 295, how could the commencement of them be posterior to the establishment of Christianity, which, it is admitted, did not obtain till the year 313.

My antagonist has a third argument to overthrow the second opinion, that on the ruins of it he may establish the first. The second opinion goes upon a supposition, that temporal dominion or secular power enters into the character of the Man of Sin, or Antichristian Beast delineated in the prophecies of the Revelation, and consequently that the Roman Pontiff could not assume the full form, or answer to the description in those prophecies, till the actual arrival of the period at which he became a temporal prince, or was invested with the temporal dominion of Rome. But, in opposition to this, Mr Gib has said, that his character is entirely of the spiritual and ecclesiastic kind; temporal dominion, or worldly grandeur, being no part of it at all. His words are these—"The Pope's antichristian character did properly lie in his most extensive spiritual or ecclesiastical dominion, and in that only. His temporal dominion did not constitute his antichristian character,—was even no ingredient in it, p. 14."—For proof that temporal dominion did not constitute the antichristian character, or was not any ingredient in it, he reminds us that both Melchizedek and David had temporal dominion belonging to them, and yet neither the one nor the other was Antichrist, p. 14. Fine reasoning! That Melchizedek was a prince as

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ing that well as a priest, and David at once a prophet and a prince, must be allowed; and that neither the former nor the latter could be the Antichrist predicted in the apocalyptic prophecies, is no less manifest. But the question is,—What similarity is there between either Melchizedek or David, and the Bishop of Rome? Are the cases at all parallel? Has a christian bishop the same title to temporal dominion or worldly grandeur that Melchizedek or David had? What an able advocate for the civil places and worldly power of churchmen is Mr Gib? Ought not *the Lords Spiritual* to embrace the earliest opportunity of making their most grateful acknowledgments to him? The disparity between Melchizedek or David, and a bishop of the New Testament, is obvious. They were typical of that all-glorious person who is our prophet, our priest, and our king. Two of these offices sometimes met in one person under the typical œconomy. But it is the distinguishing honour of the all-glorious antitype, that in his mysterious mediatory person all the three center.

There is another topic from which my opponent reasons in favour of the first opinion, and in opposition to the second. It is this—Such corruptions had crept into the church in the ages preceding 756, from which the latter opinion dates the beginning of the 1260 days, as oblige us to admit that these days must have commenced at a much earlier period. Accordingly he gives us a long detail of corruptions in the ages that preceded 756. But what is all this to Mr Gib's purpose? What he undertakes to prove, is, that the 1260 days began not only prior to 756, but as early as 295 or 313. Now, supposing, tho' not granting, that the corruptions which obtained in the church previous to 756, oblige us to believe that the 1260 days must have begun before that time, it does not follow that they prove the commencement of them as early as 313. The fact is, this is a point on which Mr Gib himself ought to have been more diffident and modest. It is not at all impossible that there may be an opinion different from both his and mine, nearer to the scriptures, and to facts, than either the one or the other. But, might I not fight my opponent with his own weapons? He reasons thus—The 1260 days of the witnesses, or 42 months of the beast, must have commenced prior to 756; for many and great corruptions crept into the church previous to that period. This is his argument.—Might I not with equal reason plead thus?—The 1260 days, or 42 months, could not possibly end about the year 1555, but must continue to this very day; for many and grievous corruptions have prevailed in christendom posterior to that period, and even continue to prevail to this very day. And is it not as easy for me to give a long detail of popish corruptions posterior to 1555, as it was for him to enumerate many that obtained prior to 756? Mr Gib, there-

fore, shouts before the victory, when, after a long enumeration of antichristian abominations that obtained in the ages prior to 756, he, with an air of triumph, puts the question—"Was there nothing antichristian, was there no antichrist in that woful state of the church?" p. 13. I will in my turn ask Mr Gib, Was there nothing antichristian, was there no antichrist prior to 313, or even 295? A writer of the first century, and one of still higher authority than him, has expressly informed us, that even when he lived, there were not wanting many antichrists. 1 John ii. 18.—The inspired writer to the Thessalonians speaks, in the plural number, of many antichrists already come, and, in the singular, of one great antichrist to come at an after-period. Is not this a plain intimation that the former were forerunners of the latter? Christ himself had his forerunner, and antichrist had also his forerunners.—That sacred writer has further told us, that the mystery of iniquity, which in due time produced the man of sin, or the antichristian beast, was working even in his time. 2 Thess. ii. 7.

But Mr Gib's chief argument lies in his own infallibility.—The peremptory manner in which he determines a question, on which the greatest and best of men in all ages of the christian church have been divided, is truly astonishing. He has in effect said, his opinion is right; it cannot be wrong. Do any ask, How comes he to be so certain he is right? I answer, He has said he cannot be wrong: Do they ask again, Is he infallible? I answer, He seems to think so.—But, notwithstanding his penetration and accuracy, he all along mistakes the proper question in debate. His reasoning, from first to last, proceeds upon a supposition of the very thing which it was incumbent upon him to prove, and without the proof of which his reasoning is a superstructure without a foundation, and, therefore, cannot possibly stand. He supposes, that at what time soever the papal apostacy commenced, then the time, times, and half a time of the woman in the wilderness, the 1260 days of the witnesses, and the 42 months of the beast, must also have commenced. But, is not this the very thing he had to prove; and without proving which, he does nothing at all? That the secular power, or worldly encouragement which Constantine gave to the christian religion, was soon abused by ambitious and aspiring churchmen, is certain. That christianity was wofully adulterated soon after it was established in the empire, and that the defection arrived at an alarming pitch previous to the year 756, who can deny? But the question is not, did the grand apostacy commence prior to 756? It is this—Did the period intended by the 1260 days of the witnesses, or 42 months of the beast, commence prior to that æra? or, in other words, whether did it commence at 756, or as early as 313, or perhaps 295? Why does

does Mr Gib date the commencement of that period so early as 313, or, if he be consistent with himself, as early as 295? Was the cessation of the heathen persecution, in which many thousands, even myriads of christians, were massacred in the most cruel and merciless manner, or the commencement of that peaceful and flourishing state of the church that ensued, such a mournful event to the witnesses as to require them to put on their sackcloth? Who can believe it?—That the papal antichrist was formed, and had advanced far towards perfection prior to 756, I have admitted already. But the proper question is—Had he, previous to that period, assumed the form, or appeared in the character delineated in the prophecies of the Revelation? Did he, in any preceding period, answer to the description of the antichristian beast in the 13th and 17th chapters of that mysterious book? In what preceding age did there appear the beast with seven heads and ten horns? In what part of the world was it seen? Is not the monstrous beast described in the apocalyptic visions, expressly affirmed to have seven heads and ten horns? Is worldly power or temporal dominion really no part of the character of this beast? What does Mr Gib understand by the seven heads and ten horns? Is not the papal power intended by this beast? Is he not said to have seven heads and ten horns, to intimate that Rome, the city standing on seven hills, was to be the seat of his dominion, and that the ten kingdoms into which the Roman Empire was about to be divided, were to be subject to him? Now, when was this prophecy fulfilled? or, when did the papal power assume the form of this fearful beast? Was it in the year 295, or even 313? Has Mr Gib as much “effrontery,” I do not say “ignorance,” as to pretend it? Was it not rather at the period in which the Pope became a temporal prince, or was invested with the temporal dominion of Rome? When did this happen? Mr Gib has informed us, that it was in the year 756, the very period from which the opinion he is so zealous to confute, dates the commencement of the 42 months of the reign of the beast.

Upon the whole, my antagonist may amuse himself and his implicit admirers, with his imaginary certainty and infallibility; but I am resolved to assert my liberty, and judge for myself.—I said at the bar of the Synod, and I now say to the Public, Were he and I to maintain a controversy about the commencement and expiration of the 1260 days of the witnesses, or 42 months of the beast;—were he to accuse me of error for inclining to the one opinion, and I to impeach him for espousing the other, we would render ourselves objects of universal derision;—all mankind, divided as they are about other persons and things, would agree to pronounce both of us fitter for bedlam than either the pulpit or the press.—The first quotation has furnished

my accuser with another heavy article of charge against me. Thus he proceeds:—

“ In the *second* place, I apprehend, that, by several passages of the sermon, a grievous injury has been done to the glorious reformation from popery.” p. 15.—For illustration, he adds, “ Hereby the whole glory of the reformation is, upon the matter, blotted out. The reformation from popery must go for nothing. Thus the reformation from popery, tho’ the most glorious of all events which have taken place in the churches of the Gentiles, would come to be considered as of no signifi-*cancy* or importance, for deserving the smallest notice to be taken of it in the whole prophecy. The system of the prophecy, as misrepresented in the sermon, leaves no room for the smallest account to be made of it in the whole book of Revelation;—no account to be made of it but at the expence of dissolving the contexture of the book; for mashing it down into the mould of the visionary schemes which have been broached by the alledged best expositors.” p. 17. 18.—Well done Mr Gib! Such a rhapsody! Shall I give a serious answer to such illiberal and arbitrary criminations? Is not a repetition of them a sufficient confutation? Do I, with one impious dash of the pen, blot out the whole glory of the reformation from popery? Do I make no account at all of that glorious work of God? Does it all go with me for nothing? Do I audaciously attempt to divest that most glorious of all the works ever accomplished in the Gentile churches, of all signifi-*cancy* and importance? Do I deny that it has any place at all in that wonderful series of prophecy contained in the book of the Revelation? Have I grossly misinterpreted and perverted those important, tho’ mysterious, prophecies? Have I impiously endeavoured to dissolve the whole contexture of one of the sacred books, even to *dash* it down into the mould of a baseless and frantic dream? Diabolical attempt!—But do not all who hold the opinion Mr Gib reprobates with so much acrimony, celebrate the glorious reformation as much as he can pretend to do? Do they not all make as much account of that ever to be remembered work of God, as he does? Are they not as conscious of the signifi-*cancy* and importance of it as he can be? Does he not know, that, far from denying it a place in the book of the Revelation, they apply to it the prophecies of that mysterious book, and in it see the fulfilment of them? Do not those writers, whom I cannot yet allow to be *romancers*, but must still call expositors, preserve the contexture of that sacred book, and the system of prophecy in it, as consistently as he can pretend to do? It is exceedingly easy for him to say I have misrepresented and misinterpreted it; and no less easy for me to say he has misrepresented and misinterpreted it. There are, however, persons

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In the illustration of this charge, my antagonist commits the same mistake as in his illustration of the former. His sophistical reasoning here, if I may call it reasoning, proceeds upon a supposition of the very point in question, and which it behoved him to prove. The thing he ought to have proved, but which he all along takes for granted, is, that at what time ever Antichrist began to fall, then the 1260 days, or 42 months of the Beast, must have ended. That he began to fall at the first reformation from popery, and that this glorious event is predicted in the Revelation, I most readily admit. The preaching of the gospel in great purity, and with signal successes, by our worthy reformers, seems to be the happy event foretold, Rev. xiv. 6. Here the inspired writer tells us, that *he saw, in vision, another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*—But the question recurs—Did the 42 months of the power of the Beast end when that glorious event happened? That his power was then abridged, is evident; but that it was then totally abolished, who will say? Have the witnesses laid aside their mourning habit, or are the days of their mourning ended? What a striking similarity between our situation since the commencement of the protestant reformation, and that of the Jews at their return from Babylon! The prospect of a second temple occasioned great joy; but the inferiority of it to the first caused great sorrow. Ezr. iii. 11, 12, 13.—For past reformation, let us be glad; and remaining popish corruptions, let us bewail. The main argument here is this—If I hold that the 260 days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth are not yet ended, I make no account of past reformations. But may not the argument be retorted upon Mr Gib? If he holds that the 260 days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth are totally ended, he certainly makes no account of remaining popish corruptions. Need I to inform Mr Gib of the woful prevalence of popery in the greater part of the world called Christian, to this very day? How many and how great relics of it are to be found in the churches called reformed? Do all these things go with him for nothing? Does he make no account of them at all?

But it is time for me to take under my review his last and chief charge against me. That he considered it as his chief accusation against me, may be presumed from different considerations. Every misinterpretation of Scripture, and injury to the protestant Reformation, he highly resents; but the Burgess-oath, and all the abettors of it, he *bates with a perfect hatred*. Accordingly, though both the two preceding charges have only one quotation

quotation to support them, this one charge stands supported by two quotations. When he favoured the Synod with a hearing of his libel, and demanded the admission of it into their minutes, he distinguished this part of it from the preceding. He insisted for the admission of the whole; but for the admission of this ever to be remembered part of it, he was peremptory and determined. Of such magnitude and importance is this article, that good Mr Gib was determined to have it inserted in the minutes of Synod,—even printed in a book; and his further wish, no doubt, is, that it may be graven with an iron pen and lead on the rock for ever.—This capital part of his work he divides into two great branches, which he, in his usual candid manner, illustrates separately. But, methinks, I hear my good reader again interrupting me—We have read the two quotations—We recollect them quite well. What heavy charge or heinous crime can Mr Gib possibly find in them? Is the concession, that, in the unhappy controversy about the Burges's-oath, there might be mismanagements on the one side as well as the other, a crime? Strange! Does he himself think that his conduct on that occasion was innocent? Is the non-approbation of the excommunication of the Burgher-ministers a crime? Is there a disinterested or unprejudiced man under heaven that will say so?—But they must now hear Mr Gib. The finishing article of my indictment he states thus —

In the third place, I apprehend, that, by several passages of the sermon referred to, a grievous injury has been done to the reformation-testimony as presently stated among the hands of this Synod, and that upon two distinguished articles," p. 18. He adds — "The first article is relative to the rupture of the Associate Synod in April 1747." Having given his account of this rupture in opposition to what he calls my account of it, in relation to the former he adds — "I am not ashamed to avow that I consider the same as the most distinguishing article of the *Magnalia Dei*, i. e. *the great things of God*, in the course of the secession, and which ought to be had in a most thankful remembrance among all posterity in the secession-body." p. 22.—In relation to the latter, or what he calls my account of the breach, he has the following memorable words — "A very different view is given of the matter by several passages of the sermon. The whole affair concerning the Associate Synod, is set forth under very black characters; as, the unhappy rupture or breach to be lamented or bewailed to the latest ages,—that dismal event,—that mournful dispensation. The memory of the Lord's great goodness, on that occasion, is blotted out:—And this great indignity has been done to the same by a member of this Synod not behind their backs, but solemnly in their face, when he was preaching before them as their last moderator; putting

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ported by stamp of infamy, before their eyes, even upon the immediate foundation of their present state. With regard to the signal work of God for this Synod on the 9th of April 1747, I hereby enter my testimony and protestation against all dissembling or defaming of it, such as is meant in the last-quoted passages of the sermon." p. 22, 23, 24. — As my accuser has supported the first branch of the charge against me in a manner that does so much honour to himself as well as his cause, I know my readers must be impatient to hear him on the second, which he has illustrated in terms no less worthy of himself. This gratification I shall no longer withhold from them.

"The second article of grievous injury which has been done, by several passages of said sermon, to the reformation-testimony, is presently stated among the hands of this Synod, is relative to their exercise of discipline in the case of their separating brethren. p. 24." Of the many striking things Mr Gib has said to support this part of the charge, I cannot forbear to transcribe the following specimen. "Thus the whole contentings of this Synod for preserving the great trust committed unto them, in the aforefaid exercise of discipline, as well as the affair of the forefaid breach,—are all delivered over, by the lump, unto a state of infamy and reproach.—An injury is done to this Synod, and the minutes of it, by the undistinguishing tenor of this declaration,—That an approbation of the censures inflicted on the Burgher brethren, never has been made a term of communion, ministerial or christian communion, among us, p. 25. 27."—I will follow Mr Gib no farther at present. Is there so much as the shadow of argument or fair reasoning here? Why does Mr Gib give us declamation and scurrility, in place of argument? Is not this equally dishonourable to himself, and injurious to his cause? Who can forbear banter and ridicule in dealing with such an opponent? Have I really injured, and grievously injured the reformation-testimony? I do, indeed, admit, that there might be sinful managements on the part of the Antiburghers as well as the Burghers. But what injury does this concession to the reformation-testimony? That Mr Gib's feelings may be hurt by it, I can see; but how it can injure the reformation-testimony, I confess, is far beyond my comprehension. Does a non-approbation of the excommunication of the Burgher-ministers hurt the reformation-testimony? Were the Synod to require of its members an approbation of that extraordinary measure, they would expose themselves, and their cause, to the utmost obloquy and contempt. The reasons of my non-approbation of it will be found in the sequel. That Mr Gib had a particular concern in it, and is, some say for that very reason, a warm defender of it, I know. But I have learned to call no man on earth Father. He has a right to judge for himself;

himself; and I have an equal right to judge for myself; and am resolved ever to do so. That I had any intention, in composing and delivering the sermon, to do an injury either to the Reformation or the Synod, I deny. Nay, I thought then, and I think now, it would be for the honour of the Synod to admit sinful and shameful misconduct in the controversy about the Burges-oath, the subsequent rupture, and their proceedings against their Burgher brethren. I will go farther, and affirm, that I defy Mr Gib, and all the other members of Synod, to produce from the history of the Christian church, an instance of more unhappy conduct in the management of any one of all the many controversies that have been agitated in it. For my part, I never can think of it but with deep regret. When I recollect what good men were on both sides of the question, and the violence with which they proceeded, I am perfectly astonished. The injury, the grievous injury, I have done to the reformation-testimony, as stated in the Secession, is said to lie especially in two things.

1. In certain obnoxious characters which I have applied to the breach in the Synod on the 9th of April 1747. When I call it a rupture, I prefix to it the offensive epithet *unhappy*. When I design it an event, the black character *dismal* is prefixed. And when I term it a dispensation, I put before it the criminal word *mournful*. These Mr Gib has pronounced *black characters*. In a paper I read to the Synod, and which has obtained a place in their minutes, I observed, that in a work with which Mr Gib favoured the Public a number of years ago, he himself designs it "that melancholy event."—Now, the material difference between his black character and my black characters, to me is not so very obvious. I know, indeed, that he is both an ontologist and a logician; and what is quite unintelligible to one man, may be quite obvious to another. Neither do I deny that a word in one man's mouth may be orthodox, while in another's it is heterodox. But why Mr Gib should, with so much severity, condemn me for applying to the subject, terms which he had previously applied to it,—I do not so well comprehend. I asked him once, and I now ask him again, Does he really think it was a happy rupture, a desirable event, a joyful dispensation? He may think so; but I must be allowed to think otherwise.

2. I admit, that, during the violent debates in Synod about the Burges-oath, which terminated in the rupture, as well as the after proceedings of the contending parties, there were sinful managements on the Antiburgher side as well as the Burgher. What! sinful managements on Mr Gib's part? Yes, sinful managements even on his part. This I admitted in my sermon before the Synod; and now aver. It is a truth no less certain

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than sad. Will he, or any other man concerned in that violent contest, deny it? Did not he, and the other members of the Antiburgher Synod, posterior to the breach, sit themselves at the bar of that Synod, and solemnly confess their sinful and shameful misconduct on that occasion, and submit to censure for it? For a particular account of the appearances of the members, and conduct of the Synod on the occasion referred to, I am indebted, and refer my readers to Mr Gib himself. He may pretend what he pleases; but there is not an unprejudiced man in the Secession, not to say out of it, who does not reflect on the violent temper that prevailed among members, during that most unhappy contest, with unutterable regret and sorrow. Who can read his own account of the matter, but with a mixture of disgust and pity? In the evening of the glorious, I had almost said inglorious, 9th of April 1747, were not the two principal persons in the Synod, the Moderator and the clerk, in such a state of stupefaction, that neither the one nor the other was capable of acting? Strange! Was this the situation of the Synod on the memorable 9th of April, of which my accuser has spoken such glorious things? Was it in such circumstances that the important question, or the difficult point, that had occasioned so much altercation among members, was determined? What a striking proof of the imperfection of the present state of the church, and the necessity of the caution—*Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Why did not the two parties immediately agree to adjourn, and, postponing the determination of the point in debate, spend the subsequent *federunt* in prayer and conversation? When he who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and the disposal of all events in the world and in the church, shall be pleased to bring the two parties together again, they certainly will look back on their past proceedings, with a degree of compunction and remorse, which it is not easy now to express. It has all along been said, that, previous to the rupture, and even before the commencement of the dispute that occasioned it, personal misunderstandings prevailed among the members. That the members on both sides wished to be actuated by higher motives, than either personal attachment on the one hand, or personal prejudice on the other, I am fully convinced. But who that knows the Scriptures, or the springs of human conduct, will deny, that the very best of men, in the management of the best of causes, may act in such a way as to incur that sharp reproof—*Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of?* Every militant saint has natural corruption remaining, as well as supernatural grace implanted, in him. And never is corruption readier to intermix itself with grace, than in the instances that call for the most vigorous exertions of religious zeal.

3. I admit, that, in the infliction of the awful censure of the higher excommunication on the Burgher ministers, the Synod erred. This, I confess, is my opinion. But what injury does this concession to the reformation-testimony? What hurt does it to the Synod? Does the Synod pretend to infallibility? Is it not one of its received principles, that all Synods may err, and, in different instances, do err? If it may err in other instances, why may it not have erred in this? The critical point, whether that tremendous censure, which has obtained the name of *the higher excommunication*, was peculiar to the apostolic ages, or is to be continued and practised in the church to the end, I purposely wave at present. But, presupposing the warrant for the practice of it in our times, I do not hesitate to pronounce the infliction of it by the Antiburgher Synod on their Burgher brethren, a shameful prostitution of it, and a chief ground of the Lord's controversy with the Antiburgher judicatures, and all under their inspection, to this very day. My accuser has formed a variety of conjectures concerning the reason or reasons of my non-approbation of that extraordinary measure; but, wilfully, or, I am more ready to believe, through ignorance, has misrepresented my opinion or view of it. Accordingly, in a long written speech, which I offered to read at the bar of the Synod at their last meeting, I intended to have given an explicit account of it; but when I apprised them of this part of my design, I could not be allowed to read it. From this speech I shall transcribe what relates to my opinion concerning the Burgher-excommunication. It is as follows.—That this Synod was warranted to proceed against the Burgher ministers as it did, I do not see; and, as long as I cannot see it, church-authority never shall oblige me to approve it. My views of the nature, the objects, and the effects of the higher excommunication, are such, that the infliction of it upon them must appear to me unjust or unlawful, as well as inexpedient. The inspired writers of the New Testament have recorded only two instances, in which the apostles, who understood the nature, proper objects, and effects of that tremendous sentence, rather better than either Mr Gib or I can pretend to do, used, or required the churches under their inspection to use it. The one, as is well known, was the case of a church-member that persisted in a most notoriously scandalous practice; the other, of two unhappy persons that had imbibed and propagated errors subversive of the very foundations of christianity. Now, are not these two instances recorded for the express purpose of directing the churches of Christ, in the several ages of the New Testament, in what cases, and for what causes, this fearful censure is to be inflicted? Are they not intended to regulate us in the interpretation and application of that excellent directory in the xviii of Matthew's gospel, which

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Mr Gib and others, through inattention to other parts of the New Testament, have explained and applied in a manner very different from the proper intent of it? Is not a gradation of censures, corresponding to the comparative demerit of offences, observed in all the churches of Christ? To continue either in a fundamental error, or gross immorality, certainly exposes persons to the severest censures of the church. Whether the persons be gracious, or graceless, is no question with me. That a graceless person may be restrained from gross immoralities and fundamental errors, and that a gracious person may fall either into the former or the latter, who can deny? What sin is it, the unpardonable sin excepted, from which militant saints are altogether exempted? Is not my view of the higher excommunication conform to the sentiments and practice of all the churches of Christ earlier and later? Can either my accuser, or any other man, produce from the history of any one church that the Synod considers as exemplary, an instance of the application of it, except in the one or the other of the two cases I have stated? Is not my view of it countenanced by the conduct of the Synod itself, for a long series of years past? Has it not, in repeated instances, permitted persons, as great offenders as the Burgher ministers can well be pretended to be, to remain unexcommunicated with the higher excommunication? I shall mention only one instance at present. Is it not a matter of notoriety, that a member of Synod, between 20 and 30 years ago, not only renounced the Secession-testimony, but adopted all the whimsical singularities of a certain modern species of independents, and, though he survived a number of years, if I be not much mistaken, he lived and died unexcommunicated with the higher excommunication? When I admit the misapplication of this tremendous censure in the case of the Burgher brethren, what injury do I to any one particle of sacred truth? What part even of the Secession-testimony is hurt? May I not *consistently* disapprove of the Burghers-oath, and also the excommunication of the Burgher ministers?—This leads me to speak of the controversy itself which occasioned the rupture, and the consequent violent proceedings of which I have been speaking already.

On the merits of that unhappy controversy, I shall not say much. Far too much has been already said by preachers and writers on both sides of the question. The insipid subject has been long ago exhausted. The debate turned on the proper meaning of a few words. To the Antiburghers, they appeared to amount to a virtual renunciation of the testimony. To the Burghers, they appeared quite consistent with it. The latter, as well as the former, professed to adhere to the testimony. For my part, it ever has been my opinion, that the religious clause of the burghers-oath is not at all calculated for the meridian of

the Secession. The original occasion and proper design of that oath, as far as it relates to religion, are manifest from the terms in which it is conceived. Our pious ancestors, the original framers and swearers of it, were not only professors of the true religion, but professors of it as by law established; in other words, they were not dissenters from the national church, but members of it. The administrator of the oath, even in our times, ever is understood to be a member of the church as by law established. Now, can a member of the established church, and a dissenter from it, have precisely the same ideas of the religion established and professed in it? And do not all casuists teach, that an oath of every kind ought to be understood in the same sense by the administrator and the swearer of it? But one chief objection I have to the Burgess-oath, is, It blends church and state, or civil and religious matters, in a manner I cannot reconcile with the proper distinction between the kingdoms of this world, and that kingdom, which he, to whom it belongs, has expressly informed us, is not at all of this world. Much, indeed, may be said in excuse for the introduction of religion into a civil oath, in the times and circumstances of our reforming forefathers, which cannot be pled in our times and circumstances. Church and state were then understood to have common friends and common enemies. The religion abjured by the Burgess-oath, may, indeed, be said to be still inimical to the civil as well as the religious interests of mankind. But is the solemn homologation of a certain system, or a particular profession of religion, indispensibly required to qualify persons for certain civil places or civil privileges? What essential or necessary connection is there between the two? May not a person hesitate or refuse to homologate the religion by law established in Scotland, and yet be as peaceful and useful a member of society as any one who solemnly receives it? We all know the origin of the law that allowed no civil traffic among mankind, but on condition of receiving a certain mark. Rev. xiii. 16. 17.—But, what concord or agreement is there between Christ and Antichrist? We live in an age of enquiry and liberality of sentiment unknown in the days of our fathers. Now the distinction between church and state, the proper methods of enforcing and promoting religion, not compulsory laws or corporal pains, but methods much more calculated for operating on the heart, the seat or subject of religion, and the rights of private judgment, begin to be understood in their proper extent. The friendly genius of the British government to the religious as well as civil liberties and rights of mankind, is known and acknowledged. Why then did not the two contending parties in the Synod agree to avail themselves of it, by using their united and vigorous endeavours to obtain an alteration of the oath, by expunging the religious part of it, or an exemption

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exemption from that part of it, as often as any under their inspection might be called to swear it? But even on supposition of the very worst, that they could not obtain an alteration in the oath, or an exemption from the religious part of it, which to many of them appeared not to comport with their seceding profession, nor yet could come to unanimity of sentiment among themselves about it,—might not some expedient have been devised for preventing the mournful rupture? Might not they, notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment that prevailed among them, have continued together in a consistency with the honour of truth, and their mutual comfort, on the following terms?—Might not the Burgher ministers, on the one hand, have agreed to require all under their inspection, who might have occasion to swear the Burgefs-oath, to forbear the swearing of it, or at least the religious part of it, not from any conviction of the intrinsic evil of it, or the inconsistency of it with their religious profession, but to prevent offence to their Antiburgher brethren, to whom it appeared quite incompatible with their religious profession; and the Antiburgher ministers, on the other hand, to bear with their Burgher brethren, tho' they could not come all their length about it, or see it precisely in the same light they saw it? By such an obvious expedient, might not the swearing of oaths apparently inconsistent and contradictory, and the woful breach in the Synod, have been happily prevented? As for the proceedings posterior to the breach, I shall only say, it is far from being any gratification to me, unnecessarily to expose the failings of the one party or the other. But that steps have been taken on both sides, which neither scripture or reason can justify, who, downright bigots excepted, will deny? Why did the one party unsynod the other, or that other party altogether unchurch the former? Why such violent proceedings either on the one part or the other? If the two parties found themselves so alienated in their affections, or divided in their judgments, that they could not, consistently with their edification or comfort, continue together, might they not, with mutual consent, have withdrawn the one from the other, without pursuing such violent measures against one another? Unusual and extraordinary as such an event might have seemed, would it not have been more consistent with the nature of a church as a voluntary society, and less calculated for begetting or strengthening the prejudices of enemies to their common cause, than the plan of conduct which they adopted?—To imadvert upon the misconduct of individuals, especially of churches, to every generous spirit, must be an irksome task.—I am under an impression of my own fallibility, and of the respectability of the religious characters on both sides of the unhappy controversy, I now write. But I glory in being a protestant.

testant. A judgment of discretion I consider as my unalienable privilege, and indisputable right. Repeated and glaring are the instances of procedure on both the one part and the other, which no man under heaven can justify. That my accuser undertakes to vindicate every thing done by the Antiburgher Synod, and particularly his great and good self, I know. But, by such an attempt, he only exposes himself, and all his connections, to universal derision and scorn.

Obvious are the instances of procedure on the part of the Burghers, which cannot be altogether justified. The manner in which they have altered some things in their testimony, and discontinued the duty of covenanting, I do not undertake to justify. I speak of the *manner* in which they have altered the one, and discontinued the other. That there is a possibility of mistakes in the original testimony, and even the corrected one, who will refuse? The authors of that compilation, great and good as they were, only were uninspired, and, therefore, fallible men. But the alterations that have been made in it, either are material and necessary, or immaterial and unnecessary. If immaterial and unnecessary, why were they made? If material and necessary, why does not the Burgher Synod explicitly avow them? Why does the re-exhibition, as if in all respects the same with the original testimony, bear the attestation of the original presbytery-clerk? As the Burgher ministers have found it necessary or expedient to discontinue the practice of the duty of covenanting, they must be supposed to have reasons which to them appear sufficient to justify their conduct. But why do they not avow and publish them to the world, that both friends and foes may know them? Does not justice to themselves, to their connections, to others, and especially their cause, require them to do so? Why did the Burgher Synod nullify the Synod of Antiburghers? What inconsistency or absurdity is there in admitting a Synod, and the validity of the constitution of a Synod, both among the Burghers and Antiburghers? Whence was the Associate Presbytery at first? Did not the original members, or the first seceding ministers, form themselves into a presbytery, in virtue of the intrinsic powers of the ministerial office, of which they found themselves still possessed, notwithstanding the arbitrary steps the judicatures of the national church had taken against them? Were not the members of the original Associate Synod, both of the Burgher-party and the Antiburgher, still ministers, or possessed of the intrinsic powers of the ministerial office, posterior to the breach, as well as prior to it? Why, then, might not the ministers on the one part as well as the other, in virtue of those powers, on their own principles, form themselves into an ecclesiastic judicature? — But if the Burghers, on the one hand, were guilty, the Antiburghers,

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on the other, were not innocent. Why did they, posterior to the breach, deny their Burgher-brethren an opportunity of a conversation with them? That the Burghers asked it, and that the Antiburghers returned an answer amounting to a virtual refusal, cannot be denied. This part of the conduct of the Antiburghers never can be reprobated in terms of sufficient severity. Though the Burghers unsynoded them, why did they excommunicate the Burghers? Was not this at once to unminister and unchristian them? I appeal to the terms of the awful censure itself. Is it possible, even at this distance of time, for either the one party or the other, to reflect on the ever to be lamented 9th of April, in the evening of which the separation happened, and not feel the most pungent sorrow?—The man that undertakes to justify the conduct of either the one party or the other on that occasion, possesses an uncommon degree of audacity and resolution. Was not the Synod, on that occasion, in a state of distraction almost unparalleled in the annals of the church? Why did the Burgher-party, in such circumstances, push the question, or put the vote, that terminated in the separation? Why did the Antiburghers proceed immediately to such an unusual and extraordinary step? Did not a step of such importance, and likely to be productive of such serious and alarming consequences, require much more deliberation? Was it not, even according to my accuser's account of it, and on his own principles, precipitant and rash?—He tells us, that it was only in the morning of the very day on which it happened, that the thought of it first occurred*. Was not the breach, therefore, as rash and hasty, as their after-proceedings were violent and arbitrary?—What a mercy was it, that the Burghers were restrained from taking the same steps against the Antiburghers, which they took against them!—As the Burghers were as confident of their being the true Associate Synod as the Antiburghers were, it certainly was at once a wonder and a mercy that they were not permitted to do so. Had they mutually excommunicated one another, to what contempt and derision would religion have been exposed! Had the honour of religion, and the ends of edification, been attended to, no censures had been inflicted either on the one part or the other. What a stumbling-block was the excommunication laid in the way of the generation!—How much has the Secession-interest suffered on account of it!

Such

* Mr Gib has informed his readers, that, in the morning of the day of the breach, "a beam of light did break up upon" a number of the Members of the Synod, p. 20. One of his brethren, in a letter to me on this subject, gives a very different account of the matter. He writes thus—"Certain persons in our communion, it is not necessary to specify who these are, you know them, and so do I, decreed the censures one and all; and condemn the light, which, on the morning of the breach, broke in upon a number of ministers, and made them leave the Burghers, and constitute in Mr Gib's house, as an *enthusiastical dream*."

Such is the violence and fury with which this most unhappy controversy has been conducted. Such are the direful consequences it has produced. Such are the unparalleled extremities to which it has been driven. Was it any wonder, then, that, in my synodical sermon, I designed it an unhappy event, a dismal breach, a mournful dispensation,—to be lamented and bewailed to latest ages? What injury, grievous injury, does this to the reformation-testimony?—My earnest desire and hearty prayer, in behalf of the two contending parties, is, that they may divest themselves of the prejudices they have imbibed, and too long entertained, against one another,—come together in an amicable manner, and dispassionately review the differences which have hitherto subsisted between them, and brought their common cause into so much discredit,—and, with a candour that would reflect lasting honour upon them, confess the irregularities and disorders that have attended the commencement and progress of this unhappy controversy. May they be speedily reunited in the truth, the proper basis and center of union among the professors of religion!—Alas! our many contentions and divisions! For *the divisions of our Reuben* there ought to be *great searchings of heart*. How much are the sincere lovers of our LORD JESUS CHRIST divided in their judgments, and alienated one from another in their affections! What a sad decay of genuine zeal! and what a woful prevalence of that which is spurious! How much more solicitous and active are many to make proselytes to a party, than to make converts to JESUS? What a disproportionate stress do many lay on the Shibboleth of a party—and what indifference do they show for the important and salutary doctrines of the gospel? How many hearers are there who hear the latter as if they heard them not, while to the former they are all ears? At what a distance do the Churches of CHRIST stand from one another?—Far am I from pleading for a promiscuous communion. Error, as well as immorality, is an infectious leaven, of which the churches of CHRIST ever ought to be afraid. But why do sister-churches, and even such as are almost one in sentiment and practice, stand at as great a distance one from another, as Jews and Christians, or as papists and protestants? What more religious intercourse is there between the two churches of the Secession, though once in the closest connection, and still agreed in the most of things, than between the church of Sweden and the church of Scotland? Even when churches cannot agree to hold communion, in participation of sealing ordinances, might not they, either statedly or occasionally, maintain a friendly intercourse one with another? Might not delegates from them severally meet for prayer,—and also for conversation, both about things in which they are agreed, and things in which they differ? Are there not obvious impor-

ant and salutary ends, which might be gained by such an amicable correspondence? Might it not tend to strengthen their hands in the maintenance of the common cause, abate their party prejudices, and remove lesser differences, which often arise from personal misunderstandings, and, when examined, turn out to be in words rather than reality?—There are two extremes which ever are equally to be avoided. One conforms to a corrupt church, so far as to become a partaker with her in her sins and her plagues. Another runs into the opposite extreme. He adopts sentiments and practices that directly or indirectly unchurch every religious society on earth, except that of which he is a member. Nothing can be more evident, than that a church may degenerate far in principle and practice, and yet continue to be a true, though a corrupt, church of CHRIST. Whether the Secession has not adopted some things, which have given too much occasion to many to say that they in effect unchurch all others beside themselves, I leave to men of candour and reflection, even among themselves, to determine.

I shall only mention one thing at present, which, I confess, has often given me no small disgust. It is the uniform practice of the Antiburgher-judicatures, to depose from the office of the ministry, and excommunicate from communion with them in sealing ordinances, every minister, who, from a conviction of injustice received from them, or conscientious scruples about any part of their principles or conduct, withdraws from them. Strange! Is it not possible that a member may really be injured, egregiously injured, by them, and have just cause to withdraw from them, till they come to see their duty, and give satisfaction to him? Is the Secession-church, in her constitution and administration, so perfect, that no one who has become a member of her ever can have any reason to scruple with any thing in her, or on any account to relinquish her? Is she the only church CHRIST has on earth? Must one be a member or a minister in her, or a member and minister of no church under heaven?—Is not the uniform deposition and excommunication of every minister that withdraws from her, a virtual declaration, that if he be not a minister in her, he cannot be a minister at all?—Is not this in effect to say, she is the only church, and her ministers the only ministers, CHRIST has on earth?—It may be objected, One may withdraw from her from the mere supposition of injustice, or a groundless dissatisfaction with her principles. What is she to do in this case? It is easy to answer—Her judicatures are to find and declare, that such a one is no longer one of them; leaving other judicatures or churches to employ him as a minister, or admit him as a christian, as they shall find proper.—Thus would every necessary end be gained, and every wild extreme avoided,—her own purity preserved, and the validity

of the constitution of other churches admitted. I do not speak of ministers or other members convicted of errors or gross immoralities.

I have now finished my account of Mr Gib's charges against me, and my answers.—It remains that I now give a brief detail of my proceedings, in consequence of his unexpected publication. The attack he made on my character, by reading his long libel in the hearing of several hundreds, was truly extraordinary and unprecedented. But the publication of it appeared to me to bespeak a *fixed* determination to murder my ministerial character.—Accordingly I resolved to apply to the Synod for satisfaction. With this view, I attended the Autumn-meeting of Synod 1784. Such an impression had I of the most glaring injustice and wrong, that I flattered myself the Synod would have interfered, and, of their own account, done me justice. But, to my disappointment and grief, I found the Synod were so far from being disposed to call my accuser to account, and to do justice to me, that, when I had repeatedly moved for an opportunity to present my remonstrance and petition to them, I was shifted—time after time shifted. I was determined, however, to persist; and accordingly, after repeated delays, I at last obtained a hearing.—The long speech I read, I was desired to leave with the Synod; and from the clerk had the following official copy —

MODERATOR,

WITH the utmost concern do I make this application to the Reverend Synod. — This Synod permitted one of its members, some time ago, to take a step, which to me still appears equally without a warrant in the Sacred Scriptures, and a precedent in the annals of the Church. Mr Gib was allowed, 2d May 1782, to read to the Synod, in presence of a promiscuous multitude, a long paper, in which, in the most unprecedented manner, he attacks my character; — pretending to find a number of errors in a sermon which I had the honour to deliver before the Synod 27th April 1779, and which afterwards was published. As that paper evidently is a material libel, it certainly was competent for me to insist, that the Synod should appoint Mr Gib to put it into my hand in due form, in order that the matter might have been brought to a fair trial. But in such a supercilious and arbitrary manner did Mr Gib proceed, that he absolutely refused to allow me once to see it, or even to leave it with the Synod, except on such terms as he thought fit to prescribe. From pacific considerations, however, I resolved to overlook this unexampled treatment from Mr Gib, and to put the best construction on the conduct of the Synod. But Mr Gib, in his unrelenting opposition to me, has now taken a farther step, which I cannot see it consistent for me, from any consideration whatever, to pass

in silence. To this Reverend Synod, therefore, do I complain, and from it do I seek redress. Mr Gib having first impeached me at the bar of the Synod, has from it now appealed to the tribunal of the Public. He appears determined to use every method in his power to murder my character, and defeat the ends of my ministry. I know that the press is as open for me as for him. Neither am I at all ashamed or afraid to meet him on any point in dispute between us. But I must take this opportunity to declare, that to me it appears utterly inconsistent for the Synod to allow its members, either from the pulpit or the press, to impeach one another in the manner Mr Gib has attacked me. Mr Gib may talk of the Synod, after the model of the British House of Commons, granting to its members, at all times, full liberty to introduce whatever they please, or accuse one another, as they may think proper, under the specious pretext of self-exoneration; but I have not so learned the order the all-gracious Head of the Church has appointed in it. Such doctrine, and such a practice, I consider as subversive of the common rights of mankind, as well as the special privileges of christians. Such vague views of church-order, I will never to adopt. That the Synod is concerned in the present unhappy dispute between Mr Gib and me, cannot be denied. The last part of his publication not only refers to the public cause in which the Synod is engaged, but has been already admitted into the minutes. And as both Mr Gib and I are members of Synod, it must be bound to do justice to the one of us as well as the other.

The instances in which I reckon myself injured by the publication, are various. To enumerate them all is unnecessary—a specimen may suffice. I shall state them as much as possible in the author's own words. Accordingly the publication exhibits the following charges against me.—Though a professed friend of the cause of truth, I have wounded it, and left it bleeding till Mr Gib condescended to bind up its wounds. p. 3.—I have done three capital evils. I have done a grievous injury to most unquestionable testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, *i. e.* as the sequel shews, a variety of parts of the prophetic scriptures of the New Testament. I have done a grievous injury to the glorious reformation from popery. And I have done a grievous injury to the reformation-testimony as presently stated among the hands of this Synod. p. 6.—I have adopted an antiscriptural scheme about the rise of Antichrist. p. 14.—I have blotted out the whole glory of the reformation from popery. p. 17.—I have blotted out the memory of the Lord's great goodness to this Synod. I have done a great indignity to the Secession cause—and I have put a stamp of infamy upon the immediate foundation of the present state of this Synod—and I have had the au-

dacity to do all this before their eyes. p. 23.—I have dissembled and defamed the signal work of God for this Synod 9th April 1747, and buried the remembrance of what the Lord then wrought for it. p. 24.—I, in effect, give up with one of my ordination-vows; and the whole contendings of the Synod for preserving the great trust committed unto them, in the exercise of discipline as well as the affair of the breach, I deliver over by the lump into a state of infamy and reproach. p. 25.—I am guilty of a defamation of the characteristical ground of the very existence of this Synod. p. 48.—By my answer to the last part of Mr Gib's paper, the very minutes of Synod are defiled. p. 49.—This is a short detail, or rather only a specimen, of the numerous and heavy charges Mr Gib has brought against me. The publication also hurts me, by an uncandid, if not an unjust account of certain facts. In a note at the foot of page 32, Mr Gib informs the Public, that I read my answer to the last part of his paper in his absence, or after he had gone out of Synod. Whether this representation be not calculated, if not intended to mislead the reader, I appeal to all the members of Synod and others present on that occasion. The well-known fact is precisely this.—When the Synod in May 1782, heard Mr Gib's paper, and received part of it into the minutes, they agreed that at the subsequent meeting, I should be allowed to read an answer to that part of it, in order that it also might be admitted into the minutes. Accordingly when the Synod was met 5th September 1782, previous to their entering on any other business I informed the Synod that I had my answer ready, and wished to have an opportunity to read it. No sooner had I made the demand, than Mr Gib rose, and, with the utmost vigour, opposed it; urging the Synod to enter on another business. For such a length did he carry his opposition, that I was obliged to insist for putting the question, whether the Synod was to hear my answer to Mr Gib's paper, notwithstanding his opposition to it, or not? When he had the mortification to see his opposition to my just demand over-ruled, and the members of Synod I think, unanimously agreeing to hear me, instead of staying to hear what I had to say in my own vindication, or for his satisfaction, he immediately rose, and left the Synod with the utmost precipitation *. His reasons for such extraordinary conduct are known

* That it is Mr Gib's usual method, when he is opposed in Synod, or matters are not going on according to his mind, to run away from it, is well known. Oftener than once or twice have I seen him do so. He once absconded for between four and five years. Of the reason of this long absconding he has given a curious account, p. 5. Well do I remember the day on which he was recalled, and returned to the Synod. A great part of it was spent in adjusting petty differences between him and his supposed enemies in the Synod. Among various other complaints, he told us, on that occasion, that a certain reverend member, whom I never bear to name, had had a horn in his side for no less than twenty years. Cruel, thou

known to himself. I forbear to animadvert upon it, or to mention the conjectures it has occasioned—Sorry am I, on Mr Gib's account, as well as my own, to add, that in his publication several untruths are told for truths. Three instances may be mentioned. Mr Gib, with a design sufficiently obvious, affirms, that though the title-page of my sermon bears that it was published by desire, I had only the desire of one member of the Synod for the publication of it; and that he was informed of this circumstance by myself. p. 6. 43.—The case stood thus.—In a conversation with Mr Gib, I informed him, that one member of Synod, and only one, had seen the manuscript before it went to the press, and he urged me to publish it. But that I ever said to Mr Gib, or any other man, that I was solicited to publish my Synod-sermon only by one member of Synod, I utterly deny. Several members of Synod, and a number of the other hearers, desired the publication of it.—Again, Mr Gib asserts, that all the coalition-meetings, as he calls them, originated from my example. p. 45.—This cannot be a fact. I can specify meetings held by ministers and others of both communions, before I either attended one, or had a design of attending one. In fine, Mr Gib affirms, that my view of the higher excommunication must be such, that brethren though contumacious in a state of most scandalous iniquity, cannot be proper objects of it, if they have been eminent and useful, if they be great and good or gracious; being a censure interfering with their interest in the invisible church. p. 52.—Such a view of that awful censure I utterly disclaim. It neither is my view of it, nor ever was. And, therefore, what Mr Gib is pleased to add, does not belong to me. It is not by me, that the controversy is thus thrown overboard, into a bottomless ocean of absurdity and nonsense.—Whether Mr Gib has acted in a manner consistent and dutiful to the Synod, in publishing his paper, when he well knew that the Synod admitted part of it into their minutes in order to prevent the publication of it;—and whether the insinuation he is pleased to throw out in his preface, namely, that though the Synod were to discuss the controversy between him and me, there is NO PROBABILITY that they would do justice either to him or the cause, be consistent with that charity and deference he owes to the Synod, I leave the Synod to judge. Matters really are in a piteous situation, if the cause of truth has only one faithful friend among us †. One thing in the publication

I, but impotent animal! Often has Mr Gib reminded me of a peevish child. Had the Synod check'd his ambition and domineering spirit forty years ago, happy had it been for them. To their cost do they now find the proverb verified—*Senex p'itacus negligit ferulam.*

† Often, no doubt, does good Mr Gib find a secret satisfaction in the pleasing thought of the striking similarity between his *zealous self* and a distinguished Prophet of the Old Testament. Often, no doubt, is our modern *Elijah*, notwithstanding

tion astonished me. After Mr Gib had brought forth the grievous charges against me, of which I have produced a specimen, he tells the Public, that he still has full freedom to hold both ministerial and christian communion with me. p. 42.—Strange! Am I guilty of a number of gross errors? Has no process commenced against me? Is no satisfaction either obtained, or even sought from me? And has Mr Gib freedom to hold communion with me? Is there here either consistency or fidelity? Is not this an instance of Latitudinarianism almost as unbounded as any that even our Laodicean age has produced. With great sincerity can I say, that my present situation, and the probable consequences, have occasioned to me a great variety of the most perplexing and distressing thoughts; and that, if I be at all acquainted with my own mind, I am for peace, as far as it is at all consistent with truth. For this Reverend Synod I have the most endearing regard. The safety and welfare of the young congregation, with which Providence lately connected me, lie very near my heart. From a variety of considerations I was much inclined to pass the publication in silence. But after the most impartial and cool deliberation to which I can pretend, I cannot see it to be my duty to do so. Mr Gib's conduct, especially if tolerated by the Synod, certainly hurts me, the Synod itself, and, which is a still higher consideration, the good cause in which we are embarked, and which we all are bound to support. Accordingly the following considerations, among others, have determined me to take this step.

1. A strong conviction of the utter inconsistency of two members of one Synod impeaching the one the other of error, and both the accuser and accused continuing in full communion with one another, without any means used either for the conviction of the accused, and his recovery from the errors into which he is supposed to have fallen, or for his exculpation from the unjust charges brought against him.

2. The heinous nature of the charges exhibited against me.—The evils with which I am charged, are very far from being of the trivial kind.—To pervert any part of the Scriptures—To hurt the glorious reformation from popery, and the reformation-testimony as stated and maintained in the Secession—To wound the cause of truth, and leave it bleeding of its wounds—To blot out the whole glory of the reformation from popery, and the memory of the Lord's great goodness to this Synod—To do a great indignity to the Secession-cause, and put a stamp of infamy upon the immediate foundation of the present state of

standing his deep humility and self-denial, constrained to say within himself—*I, even I only, have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts.* We all know who said long ago, and who only is entitled to say now—*Come see my zeal for the Lord.* No doubt he is the man, and truth and zeal shall die with him.

of the Synod—To defame the signal work of God for this Synod, and bury the remembrance of what the Lord has wrought for it—To give up with an ordination-vow, and deliver the whole contendings of the Synod for preserving the great trust committed unto them, all over by the lump, into a state of infamy and reproach—To defame the characteristical ground of the very existence of this Synod—To compose and read to the Synod, a paper of such an infamous nature, that by it the very minutes of Synod are defiled.—These, I say, are far from being slight offences, or trivial evils. They are breaches, and heinous breaches, of the first table of the moral law, which requires a faithful and steady adherence to all the precious truths and sacred institutions which the great Head of the church has delivered to us to be preserved inviolated and uncorrupted in it to the end of the world. The charges exhibited against me, must be supposed to be either just or unjust. If the former, I am a most heinous offender; if the latter, Mr Gib is a gross calumniator: consequently, either the one of us, or the other, is a most scandalous person. If so, is it consistent for this Synod—can they answer either to God or man, if they overlook the matter, or even postpone the consideration of it? Ought not the guilty person to be convicted immediately, and undergo a punishment corresponding to his aggravated offence.

3. The publication is calculated, if not intended, to murder my character, and mar my usefulness in the church. With the solemnity of an oath, have Mr Gib and I engaged to strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another's heart in the work of the Lord. Whether by the unprovoked steps he has taken against me, he has done so, he is another day to *answer* to our common Master and impartial Judge. One circumstance especially has afflicted me much.—Mr Gib, stimulated by his ill-guided zeal, chose to impeach me at the very period the Synod appointed me to take the oversight of a congregation in its infancy; and which, from its local situation, is exposed to a variety of peculiar temptations. Even prior to my admission to the congregation of Aberdeen, in different corners of that city, it was told that I was impeached of error in a printed sermon; and what the result of the impeachment might be, was uncertain. For myself, in one view, I was perfectly easy; but for my poor young congregation, I both felt and feared.

4. The character and honour of the Synod appear to me to be deeply concerned in this unhappy affair. It can with no propriety be considered as a personal quarrel between Mr Gib and me. By admitting both his paper and mine into the minutes, the Synod has interested itself in the affair, and become bound to determine in it. As both my accuser and I have the honour to be members of Synod, it must be bound to support my

my character as well as his. Especially is it bound to support the cause of truth. Either by the one of us, or the other, the truth is egregiously hurt; and to the Synod it belongs to repel the hurt.—It ever has been my opinion, that the Synod ought not to have admitted either Mr Gib's paper or mine into their minutes; and that they ought, as matters now stand, immediately to expunge both; requiring Mr Gib either publicly to retract the accusations he has exhibited against me, or to libel me in due form, and support his allegations against me. Accordingly justice to myself, to Mr Gib, to the Synod, to the church, to the generation, and especially the truth, obliges me to insist for three things —

1st, That the Synod immediately determine whether Mr Gib has acted *constitutionally* in this affair, or not. Supposing, tho' not granting, that his allegations against me are just, is not the manner in which he has conducted the affair, undutiful to the Synod, as well as untender to me? Ought he not to have proceeded as the scriptures and church-order direct in the case of offenders real or supposed, for the vindication of truth, and my recovery from the errors into which he *supposes* me to have fallen? If I have erred or offended, does it not belong to the judicatures, rather than Mr Gib, to deal with me for my conviction and recovery? Why does Mr Gib take their work out of their hands? It cannot avail him to plead, as he has already insinuated, that there is no probability that the Synod would do justice in the case. If the Synod has degenerated to such a degree, or become so unfaithful to the great trust committed unto them, it certainly is incumbent on Mr Gib, and every faithful member that may still remain in it, to remind it of its duty, and excite to it.

2^d, That Mr Gib be immediately decerned to support the several charges he has, in the most public manner, alledged against me. Of the justness of any one of the numerous and grievous charges exhibited against me, I am not yet convinced. I must still plead *not* guilty. On Mr Gib, therefore, must it be incumbent to support his allegations.—And,

3^d, That if Mr Gib fail in the proof of all his charges against me, or any of them, the Synod inflict upon him a censure adequate to his *aggravated* offence.

THIS speech consists especially of two parts—a remonstrance against my accuser's unconstitutional and disorderly procedure, and a petition for bringing the matter to a fair trial, as the only effectual method of doing justice to both of us. The petitory part of it insists especially for two things—*First*, a present condemnation of my accuser's mode of procedure. Even on supposition that he could have convicted me of error, which he

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has not done, and, I hope, never will do, he was indispensably bound, in justice to good order, as well as to me, to proceed against me in a quite different manner. Never did I find any one of all his admirers, I had almost said *sycophants*, that pretended to justify his conduct in this respect.—*Secondly*, It insists for his being appointed to support the heavy charges he, in the most public as well as arbitrary manner, advances against me. One of two things must be supposed—either he could have supported his charges, or he could not. If the latter was the case, he was highly censurable. For my part, I offered, in the most explicit manner, that if he supported any *one* of all the grievous charges he has brought against me, I should submit to a censure adequate to my offence.

To the last part of my requisition, I did not, I could not, expect an immediate answer; but to the first part, I demanded and expected an answer immediately. Why did the Synod, for one moment, hesitate or delay to find and declare, that the manner in which my accuser had proceeded against me, was altogether unprecedented and disorderly, a gross insult to the Synod, and a grievous injury to me? But it was not till after I had insisted, and again insisted, that I could obtain any answer at all. And all that I did obtain, was an appointment of two members of Synod as a committee to inspect the papers on both sides, and bring into the Synod, at their subsequent meeting, an overture on the subject. When the Synod met in the Spring following, attended, and, after waiting for days in expectation of the Synod, of their own accord, resuming the consideration of the whole affair, when the time of their rising approached, I was again under the disagreeable necessity of reminding them, and insisting for the discussion of it; but was told they could do nothing in it, on account of Mr Gib's absence by reason of indisposition. I was, however, resolved not to be always put off, but to weary both the Synod and my accuser out of their delays. Accordingly, tho' in a very bad state of health, I attended the subsequent meeting of Synod. This meeting I attended with fixed determination to make one farther experiment of their impartiality and candour; and, therefore, I waited till the very last day in anxious suspense, whether they would, in justice to themselves and their own character, as well as to me, voluntarily enter on the consideration of the unhappy cause. But, notwithstanding the cause had been for years in dependence,—I had often attended,—the eyes of both friends and foes were upon them,—I had, on repeated occasions, complained of unnecessary delays,—there was not a whisper in relation to the cause from any quarter, but the most profound silence observed. Accordingly I was under the necessity of reminding

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them

them once more of my complaint and requisition *. When they entered on the affair, my accuser and I were called, or, at least, permitted, to speak for ourselves. He delivered a speech, in which he recapitulated the chief articles of his publication. My speech, I apprised the Synod, I had committed to writing, and wished to be allowed to read it. My reasons for writing and wishing to read a long speech, are obvious. When I informed the Synod, that one material part of the design of my written speech, was to explain the reasons of my non-approbation of the excommunication of the Burghers, I was told, that I could not be allowed to read it, except on condition of my passing the parts of it that related to that point. Accordingly it was not read.—I intended to have inserted the whole of it here; but, for brevity, shall insert only the following extracts from it.

MODERATOR, It is of necessity, rather than choice, I once more address this Synod on the subject of the foolish controversy between Mr Gib and me.—On a former occasion, I said, and cannot now forbear to say again, that every repeated review of this singular cause confirms me the more in the opinion, that it is without a precedent in the history of the church of Christ; and, for the honour of religion, I hope it ever will be without a parallel. Instances in which Synod-sermons have been quarrelled, and the preachers of them called to account, are recent. In all these cases, however, the accused have had a fair trial. But is it so in my case? Am I allowed an open and fair trial? Was ever another man attacked in as indirect and unfair a manner? I am not so much as named by my accuser. Was he afraid, or was he ashamed, to name me? Is this unfair and unmanly attack resented by my fathers and brethren with the indignation it merits? On their account, as well as my own, I wish I could answer affirmatively. Why am I under the unhappy necessity of petitioning, I have almost said *forcing*, a trial? For three years and odd months have I been libelled in the minutes of Synod, and one year and almost a half have I stood arraigned at the tribunal of the Public. Hitherto have I been silent. Friends and foes wait in silent suspense, whether I have any-thing to say for my exculpation. All I ask is a candid and fair trial. I neither ask nor expect favour; but to justice I certainly am entitled. But this I have not yet been able to obtain. From Synod to Synod my cause postponed. Often have Job's words recurred to my thoughts, and I could not forbear to apply them to myself—

* The reason of the Synod's dilatoriness, or rather aversion to the discussion of this cause, is no secret. That Mr Gib was *guilty*, they all knew, and allowed. But, to condemn him, was a work arduous in itself, and to them altogether new. Conscious, therefore, of the difficulty and hazard of it, they naturally wished to shun it.

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self—
I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but
there is no judgment.—Members of Synod, so far as I can learn,
are universally disposed to condemn my accuser's conduct with-
out doors. Why then do they hesitate or delay to condemn it
in Synod? Can the Synod answer either to God or man for
overlooking such conduct? Did ever a Synod under heaven
permit one of its members, with impunity, to treat another as
Mr Gib has done me? I challenge Mr Gib to produce, from
history, such an instance. I know he cannot. Sincerely can
I say, I am for peace. Nay, such is my solicitude for peace, and
to prevent divisions and breaches, that I have often been silent
when I inclined, and, perhaps, ought to have spoken in Synod.
With various things have I been much dissatisfied, in relation to
which, from pacific considerations, I have forbore to complain.
I intended to have been more explicit here; but shall forbear at
present.—Much have I been blamed for charging the Synod
with partiality and injustice. But is there an unprejudiced man
under heaven, acquainted with the cause, that does not see the
justness of the charge? When my accuser read his libel against
me, and I insisted for his being obliged to impeach me in due
form, that I might have a fair trial, all I could obtain was a ge-
neral allowance to me in common with every other member of
Synod, to apply to the clerk for an extract of the recorded part
of it. Was my demand unjust? If just, why was it not granted?
Was I no more concerned in the libellous publication than an-
other member of Synod? Had I accused Mr Gib as he accused
me, and had he made the demand in relation to me as I did in
relation to him, would he have obtained no more than I obtain-
ed? Is there a member of Synod, or of the whole Association,
difficultured to answer my question? Often have I been told, that,
to expect satisfaction, when the contest was between Mr Gib
and me, was altogether vain. Had the contest been between
another member of Synod and me, satisfaction might have
been obtained; but from him it was vain to seek it. What
occasion the Synod have given for insinuations so very dis-
paraging to themselves, I leave to impartial persons to judge.—
Often have I had occasion to reflect on the critical period at
which Mr Gib chose to impeach me. The one day he voted for
my transportation; and the very next, he read, in the hearing of
the commissioner from the congregation to which I was trans-
ported, as well as others, his long libel against me. Was not
this cruel to that congregation, as well as me? Was it possible
for any man to take a step more calculated for murdering my
ministerial character, and defeating the salutary ends of my mi-
nistry in that congregation? As a congregation, they are, in
every sense of the word, young; their number small, and
many of them as Seceders of a short standing. One fourth

part at least of the members have been admitted during the three years I have been among them. They have all along been much inclined to run into factions and parties. They are a heterogeneous composition, collected from all quarters and corners of the Secession in the North of Scotland; each bringing with him a predilection for the peculiarities of his former minister and congregation;—one saying, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos. Their zeal far exceeds their knowledge. Accordingly they are exceedingly apt to interest themselves in everything that has the appearance of a religious concern. Easy would it have been for me to have formed a leading party among them, and to have spread dissatisfaction to the Synod as well as my accuser, of whom many of them have not the most favourable views. Of the intricate debate between him and me few of them can be supposed to be competent judges. Their very existence as a congregation, depends upon their union among themselves. Any considerable division or breach among them, must terminate in their ruin. And rather than be even the innocent occasion of the ruin of a poor divided congregation, I would wish to retire into the remotest corners of the inhabited world. And, therefore, though my accuser's libel was circulated through the city, and read by persons of various denominations in it, I resolved to observe the most profound silence concerning it. Never did I so much as make any explicit intimation of the matter to the elders and deacons, till immediately before last meeting of Synod. When I mentioned it to them, they all in one voice gave it as their opinion, that Mr Gib's publication against me had been very prejudicial to the congregation, and the success of my ministry in it.—This is a specimen of the long speech I prepared and intended to read to the Synod, but was, in the manner already represented, prevented from reading.

The Synod having called for the report of the committee, they gave in three overtures. Much time was spent, and no small altercation held, in canvassing the comparative merits of the overtures. At last the one distinguished by the name of the long overture, after undergoing a variety of trifling alterations and amendments, was adopted, and, in the end, enacted. The moment the Synod agreed to discuss the affair in the manner pointed out by the overtures, I formed a resolution not to interrupt them. To this resolution I invariably adhered. It did not matter to me which of the overtures they preferred, or what alteration they might make on them. They did not at all meet my ideas, or answer my wishes. My just and necessary requisition they all in effect overlooked. I was allowed no proper trial. My accuser was not required to support any one of all the many and heavy charges he had exhibited against me.

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Neither had I any opportunity to prove my allegations against him. No satisfaction was demanded of him, or offered to me, notwithstanding all the injustice and wrong, which, every member of Synod without doors allows, he had done to me. Not so much as one verbal acknowledgment was required either from him or me. Had the Synod acquitted him, and condemned, even censured, me, I would have considered it as one of the most iniquitous sentences ever passed by any church either popish or protestant; but less inconsistent and dishonourable for the Synod. Were not the charges exhibited on both sides relevant to infer censure, and a severe censure?—But I must forbear at present, and furnish my readers with an authentic copy of the decision. It is as follows:

"I. Though the Synod are disposed to believe that regard and zeal for the maintenance and honour of the cause professed by us, determined the Reverend Mr Gib to complain of part of a sermon preached before the Synod some time ago; yet they judge, that his doing so in the manner he did by memorial and remonstrance, accompanied with the most positive insisting that at least a considerable part of it should be recorded in the minutes of Synod for his own exoneration,—was not the most regular or eligible method of proceeding*. They judge it would have been more dutiful to the court, as well as more brotherly and conciliating to the author of that discourse, to have moved for a judicial consideration of it, or to have stated the things offensive to him in it as soon as they came to his knowledge, waiting for their judgment upon it, before he had taken such a step. And although they then saw meet to give way to the insertion of a great part of his paper in the minutes, as well as that offered by Mr Arthur in reply,—partly from the hopes of preventing their carrying their differences before the Public; yet they think it needful now to declare, that the recording of papers of such a tenor, and of such length, ought not to be considered as a precedent, as they not only occupy a disproportioned place in the minutes, but also, as appears in the present case, they greatly tend to involve a cause, and embarrass the business and procedure of the court, without producing the effect, or gaining the ends proposed, either by the parties or the judicatory. Yet in regard the discourse to which these papers relate—was delivered before the Synod, and also published to the world, which some may be ready to construct as being done at the desire or with the full approbation of Synod; and in regard the said memorial and remonstrance has been presented on the subject, and likewise printed together with the minutes relative to it;

* Smooth words! Why is the superlative degree used here? Was this mode of procedure, in any degree, regular or eligible? Far, indeed, very far was it from being the *most* regular or eligible. Had another man been concerned, it would, once, have been found to be the *most irregular and ineligible*.

it; and especially considering that the parts of that sermon remonstrated against are not of a personal or private nature, but relate to the public cause of truth, and the state of our testimony; they reckon themselves shut up to express their sentiments and opinion with reference to them, and the present state of the whole cause, as briefly as the perplexed and complicated nature of it will admit.

" II. With respect to that part of the memorial taken into the minutes,—in which the author of the sermon is charged with doing injury to the reformation-testimony as presently stated among the hands of this Synod; tho' they can perceive rather too great asperity of language, harshness of construction, and inferences perhaps sometimes too much strained in this, and not only in this, but in other parts of the memorial (as well as in the subsequent printed remarks), which they do not vindicate in the memorialist: yet they are sorry to find, that the author of the sermon has given too much occasion for the substance of the charge brought against him on this subject;—By the ambiguous manner in which he expresses himself as to the differences between the Synod and the separating brethren, and the very defective manner in which he pleads the cause of the former, and states their principles and terms of communion with reference to the latter; particularly by representing the breach and the contendings at that time only as dismal and mournful things, (and mournful doubtless they were), without taking any notice of the divine goodness, and the faithfulness of some in the maintenance of the testimony, and the preservation of the constitution of the Associate Synod in these events;—By making unguarded concessions as to the guilt and errors on both sides in these differences, without explaining how far or in what sense he considered them as severally erring and guilty;—And further, by having misstated and misrepresented the terms of ministerial communion with this Synod, as if nothing were included in these with regard to the controversy but an approbation of the Act 1746 *, concerning the swearing of the Burghers-oath. This

last,

* The Synod has here found, that I have given occasion for all the charges my accuser has brought against me. Did the Synod, when they were passing this part of the act, recollect, or had they forgot, the charges he has exhibited against me? Were ever heavier charges, of the kind, exhibited against any man? Does my sermon really give occasion, or lay a foundation for them? Do members of Synod avow, or are they, upon reflection, ashamed of this part of their act? One circumstance especially struck me when the Synod were passing this part of their act. As soon as I was informed of Mr Gib's objections to my sermon, I asked a number of the other members of Synod, whether they saw any errors or mistakes in it? and they all answered negatively. But, to my astonishment, some of these very members voted for the overture. What! could they see no error in the sermon, and yet agree to an overture that affirms it has given occasion, or laid a foundation, for all the grievous charges advanced against it? The occasion the sermon gives, is said to lie in two things. 1. The pretended ambiguity with which I express myself in relation

last, indeed, Mr Arthur has acknowledged, imputing the omission to forgetfulness. But this can hardly be a satisfactory excuse in a discourse preached and printed, in which he proposed to rectify certain mistakes in relation to the nature and design of the testimony, and in relation to the terms of communion among us; and on a subject as to which particular caution was needful, in regard of the improvement that might be expected to be made of it by adversaries or friends, and in regard to an article expressly contained in the ordination-vows of every minister, probationer and elder, in connection with this Synod. The Synod is charitably disposed to believe, that their brother Mr Arthur is well affected to the cause and profession he hath espoused; and particularly, that he never entertained a doubt as to the controversy between the Synod and the Burgher-brethren, according to his own declaration. They wish to put the most favourable interpretation on his expressions, concessions, and omissions, and hope he had no intention of hurting his witnessing profession by them; yet they are sorry, that in his papers given in to the Synod, after all the time, opportunities, and seasons he had for explaining himself explicitly and more fully on these heads, he hath never yet done it, at least in such a manner with respect to some of them as could have been wished. And, in general, he appears rather to aim at exaggerating the harshness of the usage he has met with, and to throw blame upon the memorialist, and strenuously to vindicate what he hath done, than to remove the offence

to the differences between the Synod and the Burgher ministers. But this certainly is the Synod's last shift for excusing or screening good Mr Gib. If I have one qualification either as a speaker or writer, it is perspicuity and ease.—2. The pretended deficient manner in which I support the cause of the Antiburghers, and state their principles and terms of communion, in opposition to those of the Burghers. The only thing here that has the colour or shadow of reason is this, having occasion in my sermon to give a summary account of the terms of ministerial communion with the Synod, so far as they refer to the Burgher cause, I mention only what I ever took to be the principal thing, the decision of Synod finding the religious clause of the Burghers-oath inconsistent with the testimony. One thing in this part of the act surprises me. It is affirmed, that I have acknowledged I had misstated and misrepresented the terms of ministerial communion with the Synod. That I ever by word or writing made such an acknowledgment, I absolutely refuse. That in my sermon I do not repeat all the words of the Formula on this head, but only what appears to be the radical and chief article, in which the other is virtually included, or from which it necessarily follows, I admit. That my account, however, is not mistaken or unjust, but on the contrary just and fair, so far as it goes, my accuser himself has granted.—The latter part of this article blames me for not making acknowledgments and satisfactory explanations. What the Synod intends here, I know not. Were ever any acknowledgments or explanations required of me? Why does the Synod blame me for not doing a thing it never desired me to do? Did the Synod ever signify to me, that any thing in my sermon needed explanation? Did it ever find any fault with my sermon? If acknowledgments were necessary, why did not the Synod ask them? Does not the Synod here, in effect, condemn itself?—How complaisant to Mr Gib is the Synod! Rather than not justify him, they will condemn themselves.

offence or exceptions made to that part of his discourse, by any acknowledgment or ingenuous and satisfactory explanation.

“ III. With regard to the former part of the memorial and remonstrance, read before the Synod, and since published, wherein Mr Arthur is represented as having done grievous injury to most unquestionable testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, and also to the glorious reformation from popery, by the opinion he favours concerning the commencement of the reign of Antichrist,—the Synod think it improper to give any judicial determination of the question in debate. As the meaning of obscure prophecies, and the computation of the times and dates fixed in them, are among the things in Scripture hard to be understood, and in many cases can scarcely be ascertained with certainty by men, they judge that ministers and all ought to be allowed a freedom of judging for themselves on these points; and none ought to impose their sentiments upon others, nor take offence at others expressing a different opinion, when done with caution and modesty, and not improved for any hurtful purpose. Tho’ the Synod are far from finding fault with the memorialist for the opinion he hath adopted in opposition to that of Mr Arthur on the subject, they reckon he is not warranted to assert it as a matter of faith beyond all controversy, and as evidently fixed and determined by divine and infallible authority. In this respect, and in some of the consequences which he charges upon the opinion of the author of the sermon, they judge he has carried the matter too far, and used some expressions by much too strong.

“ IV. With regard to the conduct of the memorialist in publishing to the world the papers relative to this affair, together with the minutes of Synod, without any allowance from them, as also in printing his remarks on Mr Arthur’s paper given in to the Synod, without having presented them in court, while no decision had been given,—they cannot but consider it as rash and unjustifiable; as carrying matters of complaint against a brother in the same communion, from the cognisance of an ecclesiastical judicatory, to which they properly belong, according to the rule of our Lord, to the tribunal of the Public, which the Scriptures, and our principles, acknowledge not as having any thing to do in determining differences, or removing offence among church-members: and hereby a new occasion of stumbling and prejudice against the Associate Judicatories, and the common cause maintained by them, is afforded to the generation already sufficiently prejudiced; as also to their own people, by exposing thus publicly their contentions and differences among themselves, and setting forth the supreme judicatory acknowledged among us in an unfavourable light, as either unable or unwilling to give satisfaction or do justice in that cause.—

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Though the undue delay of this Synod in proceeding to take the matters of complaint into their consideration, and pass some judgment about them, after they had entered the remonstrance into their minutes,—which delay or neglect they do not here vindicate,—may have given occasion to take this course; yet they reckon this no sufficient apology for publishing, while due endeavours had not been used by the memorialist for obtaining such a judgment, nor any intimation had been given of his having such a design; but, on the contrary, they had reason to consider him, from what passed at the time of receiving his paper, as engaged to forbear it: Much less could it be a warrant for his introducing his publication into the world, by declaring that there was no probability, if they were to discuss the controversy, that they would do justice either to him or the cause.

“ V. As to the paper presented by Mr Arthur to the Synod in September last year, after what is above declared, they think it unnecessary to enter into any minute discussion of its contents. They judge the writer of this chargeable with severity of language and violence of spirit, though he complains so much of these on the other side. They judge his charge against the memorialist, of having vented untruths, to be rash, and unsupported in the several instances mentioned by him; as the two first relating to some matters of fact or opinion of no great consequence, which, though they were as Mr Arthur represents them, deserve rather to be termed mistakes or misapprehensions, than lies or falsehoods *. And the last is only a conclusion drawn from, or a construction put upon certain expressions concerning church-censures contained in Mr Arthur’s former paper, for which, if any injury was done to the true sense of them, the obscurity and ambiguity of his language is principally to be blamed. As to the requisitions wherewith he concludes his paper, the proper answer to them may be collected from what is above expressed, and from what follows, as the result and determination of the whole.

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“ VI.

* In my remonstrance to the Synod, I charged Mr Gib with publishing to the world three downright untruths; and I was prepared to prove them to be falsehoods. But the act bears, that they were only mistakes or misrepresentations. What high privileges and prerogatives does Mr Gib possess! We have often heard of a man that cannot err: And now we know of another that cannot lie. There are only two or three things, which, the Scriptures affirm, the omnipotent God cannot do. One of them is this—*It is impossible for him to lie*. That the Synod had any intention to advance Mr Gib, or that he himself, aspiring as he is, wished to be raised to an equality with Him for whom it is impossible to lie, I do not believe. But certain I am, that the instances I adduced against him, would have been allowed to be downright lies in the case of another man. Why they are only mistakes or misrepresentations, not untruths or falsehoods in his case, I know not. Mistakes and misrepresentations, no doubt, they are. That they are untruths or falsehoods, I aver, and am ready to prove.

" VI. The Synod do hereby enjoin both Mr Gib and Mr Arthur to desist from the further prosecution of this disagreeable contest. And they agree that their silent acquiescence in this present judgment of Synod, for terminating the affair, shall be considered as satisfactory both to the Synod, and mutually to one another as to any offences that have arisen in the commencement or progress of this debate." *

SUCH is the decision which the Synod, after repeated delays, gave in this extraordinary cause. As soon as the vote was passed, they proceeded to other business. There was not so much as an intimation of the sentence either to Mr Gib or me. No notice was taken of either the one of us or the other. I was, therefore, under the painful necessity of asking leave to speak. The substance of what I said on that occasion is comprised in the demission I gave in to the Associate Presbytery of Aberdeen, which is subjoined by way of note †. I considered myself as much

* Is there not reason to fear that this injunction may give fresh offence to good Mr Gib? Is it consistent for the Synod to require him to desist from a necessary " defence of the cause of truth and duty?" The Reverend Mr Brown of Haddington, in a certain publication, with great propriety, reminded him, that he had been a Man of War from his youth; and, in the most friendly manner, advised him to spend the short remainder of his precarious life, in exercises more calculated to fit him for a better world, as well as more likely to be useful to the church on earth. Was this an unnecessary or an improper admonition? Another man ought to have received it with thankfulness, and might have profited by it. But so good is Mr Gib, and so far from needing admonition or advice from any man, that he has told us, to admonish or advise him in such a manner, is, in effect, to assign him over to everlasting damnation. p. 22.

" Aberdeen, 8th February 1786.

" THE Associate Presbytery of Aberdeen met and constituted with prayer by the Reverend William Brown moderator—Sederunt, Messrs. Michael Arthur, William Mitchel, George Cowie, and William Beulafs, ministers.

" The Reverend Michael Arthur minister in Aberdeen, offered to the Presbytery, under form of instrument, a demission of his charge, in the following terms—

" The Associate Synod having, at their last meeting, decided in the controversy between Mr Gib and me, in relation to the commencement and expiration of the twelve hundred and sixty days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, or the rise and downfall of the Grand Antichrist;—the Protestant Reformation;—and the breach in the Synod, occasioned by a diversity of sentiments among members about the religious part of the burghers-oath; and the subsequent censures inflicted upon the Burgher ministers, particularly the higher excommunication: And that decision appearing to be most inconsistent and unjust,—most dishonourable to the Synod, as well as injurious to me,—I signified so to the Synod at their bar, and withdrew with an express declaration, that, if I did not obtain better views of it, I could not continue to occupy my place in the Synod, and consequently could not continue to exercise my ministry in the congregation here under their inspection. But added, that, as I had hitherto proceeded, in this matter, by slow steps, and it was of importance both in itself and to me, I should take a little time further to deliberate upon it, and either continue till next meeting of Synod, or resign my charge in this city, to the Associate Presbytery of Aberdeen, in the interval, as I might find it necessary, either on my own account, or that of the congregation. Therefore, I Michael Arthur minister in Aberdeen, hereby deliver up my charge into the hands of this Presbytery, by which I was admitted to it on 26th June 1782, and resign my seat in this Presbytery, and the Synod to which it is sub-

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much hurt by the Synod's refusing to hear my written speech, and also by their not hearing me on the contents of the overture, previous to their enacting it. Had they called me to speak, I intended to have taken a retrospect view of the extraordinary affair, and to have shown, that I had been treated in a manner unparallel'd in the history of the christian world—to have shown, that their decision, in my apprehension, was such that they could not answer for it either to GOD or man—a decision most dishonourable to them, as well as injurious to me—and that, therefore, I could by no means acquiesce in it, or submit to it. I added, I should yet take a little time to ruminate upon it, and either continue to occupy my present place till next meeting of Synod, or resign it to the Associate Presbytery of Aberdeen in the interval, as I might find most eligible.

The reasons of my non-acquiescence in this decision, must be obvious to every attentive reader. Various scruples and difficulties have I had in relation to several things in the Secession. But, solicitous for the preservation of peace, and the prevention of breaches, never till now could I be satisfied in my own mind to relinquish it. This important step, however, I now take with the utmost freedom. It is the result of long, and, I hope, impartial deliberation. Were I not impatient to finish my irksome story, I should be much more explicit in relation to my reasons for it. For the members of the Associate Synod, I retain a real regard. Many of them, as men, as christians, as ministers, are worthy of esteem. But of the Church or Synod that has my accuser on its head, I do not wish any more to be a member.

For a conclusion, I shall subjoin a few queries naturally resulting from what hath been said, which Mr Gib, or the Synod, if they find it convenient, may answer in the manner which to them shall appear most eligible.—Was ever a member of a christian church on earth used in the manner my accuser has treated me? Has the Synod done its duty either to my accuser or me? Has any

ordinated; committing myself and all my concerns to the sovereign disposal of Holy Providence. This I do, on this 8th day of February 1786; whereupon I take instruments, and crave extracts. (Sic subscribitur) MICHAEL ARTHUR."

"Aberdeen, 8th February 1786.

"The Presbytery having entered on the consideration of the foregoing demission, found, that it turned on a controversy between Mr Gib and Mr Arthur, which had been for years in dependence before the Associate Synod, and never was under the cognizance of the Presbytery, and, therefore, hesitated about the competency or propriety of their receiving it; but Mr Arthur insisted upon it. The Presbytery spent a considerable time in dealing with him to fall from it, or, at any rate, to continue the exercise of his ministry in this congregation till next meeting of Synod. But he remained inflexibly resolved upon it; declaring, in the most express terms, that he never would enter the pulpit in this congregation again. The Presbytery finding themselves shut up, agreed to receive his demission so far as it was necessary to pave the way for their supplying the congregation with sermon; referring the case, as it stands, to the ensuing meeting of Synod: and appointed their clerk to furnish Mr Arthur with extracts.

Extracted by JAMES ANDREW, Presb. Clk. p. 1."

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any thing competent for me, or incumbent upon me, been wanting; or have I not rather used every method in my power for obtaining satisfaction, and preventing the extremities to which this unhappy affair has now come? Have I not been sufficiently deliberate in it from first to last? Why did the Synod lay me under the disagreeable necessity of urging, and again urging it to do justice in this cause? Was it not bound, in justice to itself, as well as to me, to do so of its own accord? Can the Synod answer either to God or man, for passing, without censure, the grievous charges my accuser and I have exhibited against one another? Is there another Synod under heaven that would have allowed one of its members, with impunity, to accuse another as Mr Gib has accused me? Have we not recent instances of as great inconsistencies in the Secession as in any of her sister churches? Has not the Synod, in this affair, acted in a manner subversive of all good order? Does not the express direction of an inspired Apostle warrant me, in this case, and for this reason, to withdraw from it?—That the most uncharitable construction will be put upon my conduct by many of my old connections, I know. With every species of persecution in their power I lay my account. I am already no stranger to it. But while I wish to pity themselves, I can treat all the effects of their unprovoked and unjust resentment with deserved contempt. For my direction and encouragement, I have both the precept and pattern of our common Lord. To his own master each of us standeth or falleth.—May my accuser be speedily convinced and humbled! May the members of Synod see their iniquity in this extraordinary cause, and obtain the pardon of it! May their after conduct be less inconsistent with their high pretensions to distinguished strictness and zeal! May the ministrations of the members of Synod, as far as calculated and intended for the advancement of the interests of religion, rather than of a party, be attended with signal success! May religion be revived, breaches healed, and seasons of refreshing experienced in all the churches of Christ!—May all my old connections and I have a happy meeting with our common Lord, and with one another, in the great day of JESUS CHRIST!—AMEN.



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